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CHAUCER

CANTERBURY CHIMES

OR

CHAUCER TALES RETOLD FOR CHILDREN

BY

FRANCIS STORR AND HAWES TURNER

LATE SCHOLARS OF TRINITY COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE

'Let not my weak tongue falter
In telling of this goodly company,
Of their old piety, and of their glee:
. . . . . .
. . that I may dare, in wayfaring,
To stammer where old Chaucer used to sing'—KEATS

LONDON
C. KEGAN PAUL & CO., 1 PATERNOSTER SQUARE
1878

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PREFACE.

CHAUCER is one of the few great story-tellers of the world, and many of his tales are such as children most delight in.

There is so little supremely good literature within the reach of children, that it is a matter for regret that the 'Canterbury Tales' have been hitherto unknown to them.

Differences of spelling and pronunciation are enough to deter many grown-up people from reading Chaucer, and to children prove an insurmountable difficulty; while the occasional coarseness of the 'Canterbury Tales' makes it an unfit book to be placed in their hands.

A translation or paraphrase of selected tales is then the only way of making Chaucer at all accessible to children, and this is the task which we have here attempted.

This is no place to discuss the problem of translation, but we may briefly submit that a mixture of prose and verse, however skilful, is jarring to all readers, and to children intolerable. We have attempted to preserve the poetry of the original as far as is consistent with prose rhythm. Chaucer's sunny humour can hardly live out of his powerful rhyme, but even of this we have tried to keep some faint reflection.

Liberties have necessarily been taken. Some portions have been translated, others merely paraphrased, with here and there a modern touch added. Mythological and astrological passages have been freely pruned. The so-called 'Cook's Tale' seemed so suitable for our purpose that we have put it in the place of 'Sir Thopas.' Our only plea for so great a licence is that the tale is thoroughly in keeping with the age, and that it is difficult to account for its presence in several of the MSS., except on the supposition that Chaucer intended to re-write it.

From erudition we have carefully abstained; but a teacher who should use this little volume would easily from other sources supply a commentary. Perhaps we may hope that upper-class schools may find this a useful substitute for some

of the rather dreary compilations commonly used as reading books.

We trust that this version of the 'Canterbury Tales' will lead children who may read it to turn later to the rich original, there to find a splendid amplification indeed, but not a contradiction of their old story-book. The tales here selected have passed muster with many a childish audience when told by the fire-side, and this leads us to hope that they may please a wider circle of young readers in their written form.

The woodcuts (taken from the Ellesmere MS.), for which we are indebted to the courtesy of the President of the Chaucer Society, give a truer idea of the personages of the Prologue than such modern pictures as Stothart's, or even Blake's; and we believe that children will not be offended by the bad drawing, while they will be pleased by the real power shown in these seriously-meant grotesques.

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CANTERBURY CHIMES.

INTRODUCTION.

I.

HOW WE RODE TO CANTERBURY, AND WHO THE PILGRIMS WERE.

IN springtime, when the sweet April showers have sunk into the ground parched and hardened by the keen east winds of March, and every plant drinks the rich juices that in summer will turn to flower and fruit; when the balmy west wind blows over hill and dale and stirs the green blades in the furrows; when the sun gleams bright between the showers, and the small birds, who never close an eye the whole night long, feel the stirrings of the time and make the woods to ring,—then, in the merry springtime, men's blood runs quicker in their veins and they too long to be up and doing. Some cross the seas to visit foreign shrines, but more take their way to Canterbury. There from every shire and parish of England they flock to pay, at the tomb

of the blessed Martyr, the vows that they made in sickness.

CHAUCER.

Now one springtide it chanced that I, Chaucer, who wrote all these things you are going to hear, was staying at the sign of the Tabard, an inn at Southwark, bound for Canterbury like other devout

pilgrims. In the course of the afternoon before I started, a company of twenty-nine had collected at the same hostel, all pilgrims, and all on their way to Canterbury. The inn was large and comfortable, and there was room enough for man and beast. Before sunset I had made friends with them all, and agreed to join their company. So I made ready for an early start on the morrow. But before I go any further with my story, I will first tell you what sort of men they were—what each looked like, and what was the rank and calling of each.

The first of the pilgrims was a worthy *Knight*. He had been a brave soldier from his youth up, truthful, honourable, and courteous. He had seen service in his lord's wars both in Christian and in heathen lands—in Prussia, in Russia, and in Palestine. He had visited many countries, had fought in fifteen pitched battles; three times in the lists had he slain his foe, and everywhere won respect and honour. He was, moreover, as humble as he was brave, and bore himself as meekly as a maid. Never in his life had he said a rude thing to anyone, however lowly. Indeed, he was a true gentleman and a perfect knight. And now I will tell you how he was armed and clad. His horse was good, but had no rich trappings. He himself wore a suit of chain-armour, and over it a fustian coat, which was frayed and rusted with the armour, for he had just returned from a campaign, and went to perform his pilgrimage.

With him was his son, a young *Squire*, who hoped ere long to be a knight himself; a gay

THE KNIGHT.

young lover, some twenty summers old, and his locks curled as if they had just been frizzled. He was of middle height, but wonderfully active and

strong. He had seen service in France and Flanders, and though young in arms had borne himself gallantly, in hope to win his lady's favour. He wore a short gown with long wide sleeves, and his

THE SQUIRE.

dress was as gay as a spring meadow full of red and white flowers. All day long he would sing or play on his flute, as merry as the month of May. He could paint pictures, write songs and tell stories, dance in hall, and ride at tournament. Such an ardent lover was he that at night he slept no more than a nightingale. But though he was so clever

he was lowly and ready to wait on his elders, and at table he used to carve before his father.

THE YEOMAN.

Now, though this Knight was rich enough to have had many retainers he chose at this time to travel with only a single servant. He was a *Yeo-*

man, with a close-cropped head and a nut-brown face, and clad in a coat and hood of green. At his belt he had a sheaf of arrows, with sharp bright heads and winged with peacock feathers, carefully laid in their quiver; for like a thrifty yeoman he knew how to make his own weapons, and you would never see an arrow of his with the feathers drooping or draggled. In his hand he bore a mighty bow. On his arm was a braided arm-guard, and on one side a sword and buckler, on the other a dagger in a gay sheath, sharp as a spear's point. He wore on his breast a brooch, with a figure of St. Christopher to act as a charm, and a horn hung from his neck by a green strap. You could see that he was a thorough forester, and he knew all about the woods and the animals that lived in them.

Next came a *Prioress*, a gentle lady, who smiled demurely and talked softly. Even when provoked she would never use a stronger word than 'St. Lewis preserve us!' In chapel she could sing the chants full sweetly through her nose; and she could speak French fluently, though with a slight cockney accent, for French of Paris was Greek to her. At table she showed her good manners by never letting a crumb fall on her lap, or dipping her fingers, except just the tips, in her sauce. Before drinking she always wiped her lips on her napkin, so as to leave no mark of grease on the cup. She was lively, pleasant, and sweet-tempered, though she

copied the stately manners of the Court like a woman of fashion.

But no one would mind these little weaknesses, for she was a kind good woman, and so tender-hearted that she would weep if she saw a mouse that had been caught in a trap bleeding or dead. She had a number of pet dogs, which she fed on

THE PRIORESS.

roast meat or milk and white bread, and if any died, or if she saw a man beating one of them with a stick, she would weep bitterly, so soft and loving was she. Her nose was straight and long, her eyes were grey as glass, her mouth small, with soft red lips, but she had a large fair forehead, almost a span broad, and her worst enemy would not have

called her an undergrown woman. Her kerchief was decently folded close about her neck, and I noticed her well-made cloak. On her arm she had a rosary of coral, with the big beads of green, and

THE SECOND NUN.

on it hung a brooch of bright gold, on which was graven first a great A, which stands for *Amor*, or Love, and after, the posy *Love conquers all.*

The name of this Prioress was Madame Eglantine, and she was attended by another nun, who

served as her chaplain, and a *Priest* called Dan Piers.

Riding on a palfrey next came a jolly *Monk*, as brown as a berry; a manly man was he, worthy to be an abbot, and a hard rider withal, who loved hunt-

THE NUN'S PRIEST.

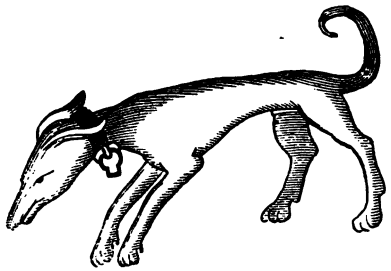
ing. In his stables stood full many a gallant steed, and when he rode you might hear the bells on his bridle jingle in the whistling wind as loud and clear as the chapel bell. In any cloister that he was set over little was heard of the strict rule of the old monks; he was all for new fashions, and snapped

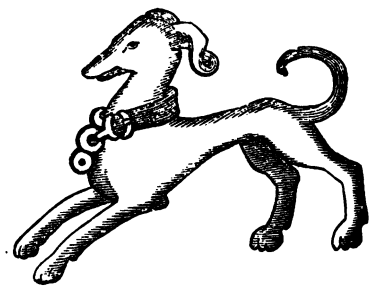
his fingers at the text which says that hunters are not holy men. As to that other text which says that a monk out of his cell is like a fish out of water, he held it not worth an oyster-shell. And when he spoke thus I agreed. 'What, after all, is

MONK.

the good of addling your brain or poring all day long in-doors over books, or labouring with your hands, as St. Augustine bids monks do? What good is all that to the world at large? Let St. Augustine labour by all means if it pleases him.'

So, at any rate, thought our monk, who was more famous for his hard riding than for his studies. All his delight was in hunting and coursing, and he grudged no expense for his horses and his grey-hounds, which were as swift as swallows. I noticed





that the sleeves of his coat had cuffs of the finest grey squirrel fur, and that his boots were of supple leather. To fasten his hood under his chin he had a cunningly-wrought pin of gold, with a love-knot for the top. His head was bald and shone like glass, his face was sleek as though it had been rubbed with oil, and his bright eyes glowed like

the fire under a cauldron. He was fat and well-favoured, with a rounded paunch which told of good living. His favourite dish was a roasted swan. Verily there was nothing ghostly about him, but he looked like a goodly Church dignitary as he was.

Next rode a merry *Friar*, called Hubert; never a fairer-spoken man or a better gossip in all the

THE FRIAR.

country round, and he was looked on by his brethren as their best man and a pillar of the Church. He was a friend of all the small farmers of the county, and he was welcomed by many women of rank in the town. For he had powers from the Pope to act as their confessor, and, as he himself was fond of boasting, this was more than every parish priest could do. People liked to have him as their father-confessor, for they were

not frightened at him when they told him their sins, and he readily forgave them and granted them absolution. For, if he was sure of a good meal as his fee, he never imposed a severe penance. And if he was taken to task he used to argue thus: 'Many men are so hard-hearted that, repent as they may, they cannot weep. Therefore, instead of praying and weeping, let men give their silver to poor friars. If a man give his money to a begging friar 'tis a sure sign that he is penitent.'

The women all doted on him, for his cowl was always crammed with knives and pins to give away to the pretty ones, and he had a good voice, and could troll out a merry glee or play the harp, and at a ballad he had no equal. His neck was as white as a lily, and he was as strong as a prize wrestler.

He knew the taverns in every town, and was more familiar with the landlords and landladies than with lepers or beggar-women, for it was, of course, beneath the dignity of such a man as he to have dealings with such low creatures, or, indeed, with anyone below the rank of a rich farmer or tradesman. But wherever there was an honest penny to be turned he was most attentive and courteous, and he was the best beggar of all the company of friars to which he belonged.

Indeed, what he earned by begging was more than his regular income. For he had such a pleasant way with him that even a widow so poor that

she had to go barefoot, if he came to visit her, would manage to find a penny for him before he went. He was as playful as a kitten, and yet so respectable that he was constantly chosen as an umpire when men wanted to settle their differences. For he was not like a poor scholar in a threadbare gown, but he looked like a great Church dignitary

THE MERCHANT.

or the Pope himself. His cope stuck out from his shoulders as stiff and round as a brand-new bell straight from the mould. To add grace to his speech he pretended to have a slight lisp, and when he had done singing and his fingers still wandered over the harp-strings, his eyes twinkled like stars on a frosty night.

Next came, riding on a tall horse, a worthy

Merchant, with a forked beard, dressed in a coat of divers colours, and on his head a beaver hat. He was a thriving man, and knew how to drive a good bargain, and he liked to brag about his business.

The next pilgrim was a strange contrast to the last—a poor Oxford *Scholar*, with hollow cheeks

THE CLERK.

and a sad face. His horse was as lean as a rake, and he was no fatter than his horse. His overcoat was threadbare, for he had never laboured to be rich or bestirred himself to get a living. The twenty volumes of Greek, in their red and black

bindings, which he kept on the bookshelf at the head of his bed, were more prized by him than purple robes or harps of gold.

He was a philosopher, but he had not found the philosopher's stone, which turns all it touches into gold. What little money he got from his friends was spent on books and learning, and all

THE MAN OF LAW.

the return he could make was to pray day and night for the souls of his kind patrons. All his time, save what he spent in prayer, was given to study. His words were few, but always to the point—sometimes a pithy proverb, sometimes a weighty saying of the Greek sages—and he was no less ready to learn himself than to teach others.

There was also a *Lawyer*, a very Solomon, to

judge him by his discourse. He had at his fingers' ends all the laws and statutes from William the Conqueror downwards, and had often sat as a judge on the bench. Nowhere could you see so busy a man as he, and yet he always seemed busier than he really was. His dress was plain and homely—a parti-coloured coat, with a girdle of striped silk.

THE FRANKLIN.

With him rode a rich *Farmer*, who farmed his own land. He was a man of rank in his county, and had held many important offices; Lord High Sheriff had he been, and overseer of the public accounts, and had sat in Parliament as knight of the shire. His face was ruddy and his beard

white as a daisy. He liked good living, and fared sumptuously every day. He always broke his fast with cake sopped in wine. He was a most hospitable man and the prince of entertainers in his own county.

At one o'clock bread and ale were always put on the table, and all day long his board stood spread in the hall. His cellar was well filled with wine, and his larder with baked meats. Of fish, flesh, and fowl he had such a store that in his house it seemed to snow meat and drink, and his fare was as various as plentiful, for with each season there was a fresh delicacy. In his coops he had full many a fat partridge, and in his stew-ponds many a bream and tench. Woe to his cook if his dinner was not served in time, or if the sauce was not hot and to his liking. At his girdle, which was as white as fresh milk, hung a knife and a purse of silk.

There were also a number of tradesmen and artizans—a *Haberdasher*, a *Weaver*, a *Dyer*, an *Upholsterer*, and a *Carpenter*—all dressed in the livery of their guild, and all in spick-and-span suits. Their girdles, their purses, and their knives were all ornamented with silver. Each of them looked a rich and prosperous man, worthy to sit at the high table in the Guildhall; and their wives were accustomed to be called Madam, and when they went to church to walk first and have their mantles carried by pages.

These wealthy tradesmen took with them their own *Cook*, to boil their chickens and marrowbones, and make rich sauces. He was a first-rate cook, and could roast and seethe, and boil and fry, bake pies or make rich soups; and he had, moreover, a fine taste in London ales. It really grieved me to see

THE COOK.

a man who could make a mince-meat pie so well as he with a horrible cancer on his chin.

Next came a *Seaman*, the captain of a bark called 'The Madelein,' who hailed from Dartmouth, in the West country. He was mounted on a rough nag, and, like most sailors, was but a poor rider.

He had on a dress of blue serge, which reached to his knee, and under his arm was a dagger, strung by a string round his neck. The hot summer had bronzed his face, and he was a rare good fellow; but he was not much troubled with pricks of conscience, and he did not stick at trifles. Many a

THE SHIPMAN.

draught of wine had he taken on the sly, in the course of his voyages from France, while the owners slept. If he fought at sea and got the upper hand he would throw overboard the crew of the ship he had boarded and bid them swim to land as best they could.

But he was a first-rate seaman. If you searched

from Hull to Carthage you could not find a better man to steer a ship between sunken reefs and sand-banks, or to tell you the currents, the tides, and the quarters of the moon. He knew every haven from Gothland to Cape Finisterre, and every creek

THE DOCTOR.

in Brittany and Spain. Hardy was he and daring, and with many a tempest had his beard been blown about.

There was with us also a *Doctor of Physic*, a marvellously clever man. He used not, indeed, to *feel* the pulse or look at the tongue of his patients,

but he would calculate what star was highest in the heavens at the time when the patient was born, and find out whether his body was by nature hot or cold, moist or dry, and then prescribe accordingly, and send him off to the apothecary to get a powder or a plaister. The doctor and the apothecary were old friends, for each of them put money into the other's pockets. The doctor was richly dressed in scarlet and blue, and his coat was lined with the finest silk. Yet he spent but little, lived frugally, and ate only plain wholesome dishes, and very moderately of them. All his large earnings in the plague-year he put by. We read in the works of the old doctors that gold is a cure for all diseases, and this doctor, strange to say, followed his own prescription. He did not read his Bible much, but he knew well all the writings of the old physicians.

There was also a good *Wife of Bath*, famous for her cloth-making, so that she beat all the cloth-makers of Ypres and Ghent. On the Sunday when, as the custom was every year, the women went up to the altar to kiss the relics and make their yearly offerings, she went first, or if any dared to go before her she would scowl at them even in church. The kerchiefs she wore on her head on Sundays were of the finest cloth, and with the gold ornaments on, I'll wager they weighed close upon ten pounds. Her stockings were of scarlet and without a wrinkle, and her shoes were of the finest

kid. She was a bold-faced woman, with a fair, ruddy complexion, but I must own that her teeth were too wide apart for perfect beauty.

She had been a prosperous woman all her life, and had married five husbands at the church-door, not to reckon the lovers she had had in her youth,

THE WIFE OF BATH.

about whom there is no need to tell you any more at present. She had been a great traveller in her time, and thrice had she been on a pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and she could tell wonderful stories of what she had seen by the way. She was mounted on an ambling horse, and wore a thick scarf round

her neck, and on her head a hat as broad as a shield. Round her waist was a shawl reaching to her feet, and on her heels a pair of spurs. She was a lively companion, full of laughter, jests, and gossip.

There was also a good country *Parson*, poor indeed in worldly goods, but rich in holy thoughts

THE PARSON.

and work. And he was as learned as he was good. He preached Christ's gospel truly, and taught his congregation devoutly. He was kind and wondrous diligent, and though often tried was always found patient in adversity. He was loth to go to law or excommunicate men for not paying their tithes, but rather would he give of his own substance to the poor of his parish, for he wanted little for himself. His parish was wide and the houses far apart,

but neither rain nor thunder could stop him from visiting anyone who was sick or suffering, whether rich or poor, near or far. Yet he was too poor to keep a horse, but trudged all the way on foot, stick in hand.

He set his flock a good example by doing himself what he taught others to do. It was a favourite saying of his, 'If gold rust, is it likely that iron will keep bright?' By gold he meant the ministers, who ought to be the choicest and best; and if the ministers are foul and tarnished, how can we expect that the baser metals (that is, the common people) will keep pure and undefiled?

He was not one of those gadabout parsons who leave their flocks with only a curate to look after them and go to London to get a canonry at St. Paul's, or shut himself up in a cloister; but he dwelt at home and kept his flock from the ravening wolf, for he was no hireling, but a true shepherd. Holy and virtuous as he was, he did not give himself airs or look down on sinful men, but he talked freely and kindly with all, for he was always trying to draw men to heaven by fair means. But if he found any obstinate and hard-hearted he would not fear to take him sharply to task, no matter whether he were rich or poor. The lessons of Christ and of his twelve Apostles he taught, but first he followed them himself.

With the Parson was his brother, who was a simple *Ploughman*. He was a downright hard

worker, and many a hard day's work had he done at threshing, ditching, and carting manure ; and he did not always work for wages, but would often do a job for nothing to help men poorer than himself. He paid all his tithes to the full, and lived in peace and perfect charity with his neighbour. He loved God with his whole heart and at all times, come weal, come woe. This ploughman was dressed in a smock-frock, and rode on a mare.

I fear that you are tired of hearing about all these pilgrims, but four more will finish the tale—a Miller, a Manciple, a Reeve, and myself.

The *Miller* was a big-boned, sturdy fellow, as he proved by always carrying off the prize at wrestling-matches. He was a stout thick-set man, with broad shoulders. There was no door in the parish so heavy that he could not heave it off its hinges, or so thick that he could not ram his head through the panels. His beard was red like a fox, and as broad as a spade. On the tip of his nose was a wart with a tuft of hairs on it as red as the bristles on a sow's ears. His nostrils were black and large, and his mouth as wide as a gaping furnace. He was a wit and a jester, and a free liver.

He was a first-rate miller, yet he was not content with his lawful profits, but would filch the corn that was sent him to grind and take treble toll on it. He wore a white coat and a blue hood, and at his side a sword and buckler. He could play the

bagpipes well, and it was to the sound of his music that we marched out of the town.

THE MILLER.

The *Manciple* was a sort of steward, who had to buy provisions for the lawyers who live at the Temple, close to Temple Bar. He knew so well how to bide his time that, whether he went upon credit or paid ready money, he always had the pick of the market, and was a model for all caterers. He had more than thirty masters, all expert and cunning lawyers, and there were at least a dozen

members of that Inn such good men of business that they might have managed the estate of the greatest lord in England, and yet this Manciple

THE MANCIPLE.

took the conceit out of them all. Now, is it not a marvellous talent in an untaught man like him to be a match for such a lot of learned men?

The *Reeve*, or Bailiff, was a thin, hot-tempered man, with a close-shaven beard and hair cropped round the ears, and his head in front was all shaven and shorn like a priest's head. His legs were long and lean like a walking-stick, and you could see no calves. If any barn or bin of corn was under

THE REEVE.

his charge the measure would always be found correct.

He knew to a bushel what a field of corn would produce in a rainy and what in a dry season. His lord's sheep and oxen, his cows and swine, his horses, his poultry, and his farm stock, were all in

this bailiff's keeping, and he was bound by covenant to render an account of them all, as his lord was only twenty years of age; but he was never found in arrears with his accounts. All the under-bailiffs, shepherds, and farm labourers dreaded him like the plague, for he was up to all their tricks.

He lived in a comfortable house on a heath, shaded by green trees. He had made a large fortune, and could afford to lay out more money in purchases than his lord. He knew how to win his lord's favour by lending or giving him what was really his own, and his lord would be grateful and present him with a coat or hood as a mark of his favour. In his youth he had learned a craft, and he was a capital carpenter.

This Reeve rode on a fine dappled grey horse, called Scot, and was dressed in a long blue surcoat, wrapped about him like a friar's gown, and by his side he bore a rusty sword. He came from a town called Baldeswell, in Norfolk, and he always rode last of the company.

There was with us also a *Summoner*, or officer, whose business it was to summon men to appear before the archdeacon's court. He was an ugly man, with narrow eyes and black scurfy eyebrows, and a face all over pimples, as red as fire, and children were afraid of him and ran away when they saw him. He liked strong dishes flavoured with garlic and onions, and strong wines red as blood. When he had drunk too much he would jabber

nothing but Latin. He had picked up in the law courts a few scraps of law, as he could not help doing, as he was there all day long; but when you came to examine him you soon came to the bottom of his knowledge.

In fact, he was just like a parrot who has learnt to say 'Pretty Poll,' and can say that as well as the Archbishop of Canterbury, though it can't say

THE SUMMONER.

a word more. He was an easy-going, good-natured fellow, and was never hard on anyone who gave him a bottle of wine, but would wink at his misdoings and say nothing about them. 'My good friend,' he would say to such a one, 'you need not be afraid of the archdeacon's curse, if only you are ready to pay the bill: after all, the archdeacon can only touch your pocket.' But this, you know, was

a lie, for it is a terrible thing to be cursed and excommunicated by the Church, and a blessed thing it is to be absolved and pardoned. All the young men and women of his diocese were in deadly terror of being summoned by him to appear in court, so they told him their secrets and asked his advice

THE PARDONER.

He cut a strange figure as he rode along, for he had on his head a garland as big as the ivy-bush you may see sometimes hung outside an inn, and he carried before him as a shield a big round cake.

Side by side with the Summoner rode his friend the *Pardoner*. The Pardoner was a well-born priest who had come straight from the Pope's court at

Rome, and sold people pardons which he had got from the Pope. As he rode along he sang out a merry love-song—

> Come hither, love, to me;
> Your lover let me be—

while his friend the Summoner trolled out the bass with a voice like a big trumpet. His hair was as yellow as a honeycomb, and hung down his back in straggling locks like a skein of flax. But, thin as it was, he was proud of it, and wore no other covering for his shoulders, but kept his hood stowed away in his wallet. Only on his head was a cap, with a medal sewed upon it, and on the medal was graven an image of our Lord. 'Tis the newest fashion,' he would say, 'to ride thus lightly clad.' His wallet lay before him on his lap brim-full of pardons all hot from Rome. His eyes were bright like a hare's eyes, his face was smooth and beardless like a woman's face, and his voice was small like the bleating of a goat.

But for a Pardoner so skilled in his profession you might search in vain from John o' Groat's House to the Land's End. In his bag he had all sorts of precious relics, and each of them had a wonderful history attached to it. There was a common pillowcase which he said was the veil of the Blessed Virgin; and here (he would say), is a bit of the sail which St. Peter used when he went a-fishing on the Sea of Galilee before Christ called

him to be a fisher of men. He had a tin box in the shape of a cross full of common stones, which he declared were the pebbles with which David slew Goliath the giant; and a crystal glass filled with pigs' bones, which he said were bones of the blessed martyrs, and had power to cure all manner of diseases. These old wives' tales he made silly folks believe, and thus got more money from them in a day than the poor parson would in a month.

But he was no less great as a priest in church than he was as a pardoner abroad. He read the lessons well and intoned the service, and he sung the hymns loud and merrily, for he thought to himself, after the hymn comes the sermon, and he knew his power as a preacher, and that he could draw money from men's pockets.

Now I have told you very briefly the rank, the dress, and the number of this company, and the reason why they were gathered at the Tabard inn in Southwark. But I have still to tell you of our doings on the night when we came together; and after that I will describe our journey, and what befel us by the way. But before I begin my tales I would first warn you that you must not be offended if my language seem sometimes coarse and rude. You know as well as I that the first thing a story-teller has to do is to report the exact words of each speaker, however plain-spoken he be. You must also pardon me if in my tales I have neglected to observe the differences of rank and station.

myself am a plain man, and ignorant of such nice distinctions.

Our host welcomed each one of us heartily, and set us down to supper, and served us with the best of food and drink. The wine was strong, and we did not spare it.

Our host, whose name was Harry Bailly, was a large man, of commanding presence, with bright eyes, bold of speech, wise, and well-instructed, fit to have marshalled the guests in any lord's hall. But he was withal a right jovial man; and after supper, when he had cast up our bills, he began to make merry, and among other things he said to us, 'My masters, I bid you all a hearty welcome, for by my word there has not come this year to my hostel so merry a company as you. Gladly would I add to your mirth if I knew how.

'And I now bethink me of a merry game to enliven your journey which will not cost you a penny. You are bound for Canterbury: I wish you all god-speed, and may the blissful Martyr reward you for your piety! Now, I will be bound that, in order to pass the time as you journey, you'll be for telling merry tales; for truly there's no fun in riding along dumb as a stone.

'Therefore I have a proposal to make which will add to your merriment. If you trust me, and will do as I bid, hold up your hands without more ado; and if to-morrow when you have ridden you say that I have failed in my promise to add to your

cheer, by the soul of my sainted father I swear that I will pay for it with my head.' We did not take long to debate, but agreed to his conditions, and bade him tell us his device. 'My masters,' said he, 'give me your ears, and be not offended if my counsel seem to you very plain and simple. In brief it is this: I propose that each of you, in order to shorten the journey, shall tell stories of adventures that have befallen people: two stories on the way to Canterbury, and two on the way back. He who does best—that is to say, he who tells the pleasantest and most entertaining stories—shall have a supper at our common cost in this very inn and this very room, on our return from Canterbury.

'And to make you the merrier I will gladly ride with you all at my own cost and be your guide. And if any sets himself against my judgment, as a punishment he shall pay for all our expenses by the way. If you are agreed to this say so without more words, and I will make ready at once for my start on the morrow.' So we all consented, and prayed him to do as he said, and be our captain and the judge of our tales, and to set a price for the supper which we were to stand to the best story-teller, and we promised in all things to submit to his discipline. Thereupon we ordered up more wine, and when we had drunk it we went straight to bed without more delay.

On the morrow, at sunrise, our host rose and himself cooked our breakfast, and marshalled us in

order, and forth we rode, at a little more than a foot's pace, till we came to St. Thomas's Ford. There our host pulled up and called a halt. 'My lords,' he cried, 'you remember our bargain, and if ye hold to-day to your words of yesternight one of you is bound to begin a tale. If any of you rebel, by my faith he shall pay our bill by the way, or may I never taste again wine or ale. Now, to settle who shall start the game, let us before we ride another step draw lots, and he who draws the shortest shall begin.' With that he called to him the Knight. 'Sir Knight,' he cried, 'my lord and master, draw, I pray thee; and you, Lady Prioress, come near and draw. Rouse you, Sir Clerk, forget your studies for a moment. Why so bashful? Come and draw; draw lots one and all.'

So we began every one of us to draw, and as luck would have it the lot fell to the Knight, and we were all glad that it was so; and so, as we had agreed, he had to tell the first tale. And when the good man saw that he was in for it he made no demur, but gave his assent, and said, 'Since it is fated that I am to begin the game, I accept the lot right heartily. Forward, then, my masters, and hearken what I say.' And with that word we rode forth on our way, and with a merry cheer he began his tale anon, and this was the tale.

THE KNIGHT.

THE KNIGHT'S TALE.

PALAMON AND ARCITE.

ONCE on a time there was a duke named Theseus, who was king of Athens. He was a great conqueror, and was often away from home fighting in foreign lands. He had conquered lawless coun-

tries and killed many savage monsters, and was more famous than any man alive. At last he rode to fight in Scythia, a country of the North, where a fierce race of women lived called Amazons. These women fought like men, and were as strong as men, but Theseus conquered them and their queen, Hypolita, as he had conquered all before them.

Now, the young queen Hypolita was as beautiful as she was bold, so that Theseus loved her, and asked her to marry him. So they were married, with feasting and songs, and he brought her home across the sea to his own country, and with her her sister Emily, who was then only a little girl.

So Theseus and his queen Hypolita and little Emily, and the soldiers with their swords and spears, came riding back to Athens. It was now the queen's home and Emily's too, for they loved strong Theseus far too well ever to think of turning back to dreary Scythia to reign over those cruel women. All the army were so proud of great Theseus' victories that they came with music playing all the way.

But it happened that as the duke drew near to the town, riding along in all his pride and glory, he looked on one side of the road and saw a company of ladies kneeling in the way. They knelt two and two in a long line, and were crying, and all dressed in black. They sobbed and cried so loud

and piteously that the glad music stopped, and it was terrible to hear them when all else was silent. They never ceased their cries, but caught with their thin arms at the bridle-reins, and the duke's horse stood still.

'Who are you?' said Theseus. 'And why do you disturb my glad return with cries and tears? Do you envy me my honour and my joy; or has anyone done you wrong? Tell me why you are all clothed in black, and whether I can help you.'

Then the eldest of the ladies, fainting for grief, and pale as death, at last found words and said, 'Great lord and conqueror, we do not envy you your honour and your joy, and we are sorry to disturb your glad return with our cries and tears. We pray you to have pity on us, for you are pitiful, and ours is a sad lot. Each one of us was once a duchess or a queen, and now we are but wretched widows, broken-hearted, as you see. All this fortnight we have been waiting and waiting for your coming in the Temple of Mercy, close at hand. My husband was the Prince Capaneus, who went to fight against the men of Thebes, the city of seven gates, where the King Creon reigns, and the husbands of these noble ladies went with him. But cruel Creon slew them one by one, and brutally cast their poor bodies into a heap together, and would not bury them; and, oh! they are lying unburied and unburnt, and are torn and devoured by the crows and the dogs! At these

words they burst into tears again, and fell on their faces, and cried aloud, 'Pity us, pity us, and make King Creon give us our dead husbands' bodies back.'

When Theseus heard this he felt very sorry for the poor ladies, and was angry to think of such a thing; and he threw himself from his horse and raised them from their knees and comforted them, and swore a great oath and said, 'I will march against Thebes this very day and find this wicked king and kill him. My people and all Greece shall remember how Theseus served Creon, and how richly Creon deserved his death.'

So Theseus did not wait—no, not half a day. He sent his bride, Queen Hypolita, with her young sister Emily, to live in Athens and wait for him there; and he, with all his knights and the poor ladies, set out to ride to Thebes. Before him was carried his broad white banner, with a figure upon it of Mars, the War-god, shining red, and the fields glittered beneath it as they passed. And by the side of this great banner a smaller flag was borne, stamped with the picture of a fearful beast called the Minotaur. It used to eat children up alive, and Theseus had killed it long ago.

Now you know how this great duke looked as he rode with his army to Thebes, and if you had seen him riding there you would have said he was the noblest of them all.

It would take too long to tell you all that

Theseus did at Thebes. It is enough for you to know that he fought a great battle, and killed the cruel king with his own sword. He restored the bones of their husbands to the poor ladies, and gave them great comfort by the wonderful and glorious funeral which he made for those dead princes. And he took the city of Thebes, and pulled down the walls and houses. The beams and rafters clattered and fell, and the city was a heap of ruins.

Now, on the night of the last great battle the duke slept in his tent, in the same place where they had fought; and all that night the plunderers were creeping about among the dead bodies to strip them of their armour and their clothes. As they were searching among a heap of bodies they found two young soldiers lying side by side, in armour, just alike, as if they were brothers; and although these young knights were covered with deep wounds they were not dead, but lay between death and life. By the gay coats which they wore over their armour the robbers thought they must be princes, and brought them softly to the tent of Theseus. Then, though the wounded men were senseless and could not speak to tell their names, the heralds soon knew them by the signs upon their coats, and said that their names were Arcite and Palamon, sons of two sisters, and cousins of King Creon.

Then Theseus, when he knew they were his

enemies and cousins of the hated king, sent them to Athens to be put in prison, and kept there all their lives. He would take no money to let them go.

So Theseus rode back to Athens more glorious than before, and lived with his dear queen in great delight. But Palamon and Arcite were prisoners. They were shut up in a thick tower in Athens, and were very sad; for year followed year, and day went by after day, and they knew that they should never go into the free sunshine any more. But after a time the gaoler let them go into a prison-room at the top of the tower. It had a window shut in with thick iron bars, and they could only look through the squares between the bars; but still they could see over the beautiful city and look at the green trees underneath, for the dungeon-tower was built close to the duke's palace and stood beside the palace garden, which was full of flowers and trees; and this high window was a little comfort to them in the summer days.

So passed the time for these poor prisoners, and their chief help was that they loved each other more than if they had been brothers, and often swore that they would always help each other till they died.

Now, Emily, the sister of Hypolita, was grown to be no more a little girl, but she still woke early in the bright mornings, as little children do; and one May morning, before the dark was

gone, she woke and wished so much to wander in the garden that she loved, to hear the twitter of the waking birds, and see the first sunbeams strike upon the grey dew and the flowers, that she rose at sunrise and went into the palace garden all alone. Her yellow hair was braided in a tress behind, and fell a full yard down her back. She was as fair as a lily on its green stem and as fresh as the month of May, and the roses she was picking were not brighter than she. She gathered roses; she wove herself a crown of white and red, and as she tripped along she sang like any angel out of heaven. She did not know of Arcite and Palamon, or if she had known about them once she had long since forgotten them; but they were in the dungeon-tower that stood by the garden-wall.

The sun was bright on this clear morning, and Palamon had been awake before the earliest birds, for prisoners cannot sleep like other men. He was in the high room that overlooked the garden and the town, and as he cast his tired eyes, that seemed more tired after sleep, upon the May sunshine that was outside his window-bars, suddenly he saw sweet Emily with her yellow hair wandering up and down the garden-paths.

Then Palamon loved her so with all his heart that he cried out, 'Ah!' as if he had been stung with some sharp pain.

Now, Arcite was sleeping; but when he heard his cousin call out like one in pain he started up

and said, 'What ails you, Palamon, that you cried out so loud and are as pale as death? Who can have harmed you here? Or are you only thinking of our misery that we are to be chained here in prison all our lives? Have patience, dear cousin. We were, doubtless, born under an evil star. If all this sorrow was to happen, happen it must; it is no fault of ours; we should bear it patiently like men.'

'Ah! no, cousin,' answered Palamon again. 'You are all wrong. It was not that I thought about our prison and our chains. It was the lovely lady that I see walking there in the garden below. Her beauty has passed into my eyes and into my heart, and my heart will be sore for love of her evermore. Is she a real woman or some fairy queen who has slid down from heaven to be kind to us perhaps? Oh, she must be the very queen of beauty and of love—she is the goddess Venus whom I see.' And Palamon knelt down beseechingly, and stretched out his hands to the Princess Emily, and cried with piteous voice, 'O Venus, gracious lady, if indeed you have deigned to appear in mortal form, have mercy on us woeful prisoners, and help us to escape this dreary prison and to see our homes again; or, if we must die here, and there is no help or hope, have pity, then, upon our father's house, that is brought so low by tyranny.'

Then as Palamon was speaking, his cousin Arcite for the first time had sight of the fair lady

roaming to and fro, and was smitten with love of her as much as Palamon, or more; and he sighed piteously, and said, 'I am pierced to the heart by the fresh beauty of her who is walking yonder. I must have her love, or at least see her near, else I shall die.'

Then Palamon gave Arcite angry looks, and said, 'You do not speak in earnest but in play.'

But Arcite answered, 'I am in no mood for play. I love her with all my heart.'

Then Palamon knit his brows and frowned, and called Arcite a traitor and false friend, and said: 'Did we not swear—have we not sworn many a time—never to hinder each other all our lives, but each to help the other in all things until our death? How can you dare to say you love the lady that I serve?—for I will serve her faithfully to my last breath. I loved her first, and told my love to you, because I thought you were my brother and friend; and now you are bound as a true and honest man to help me as much as you are able, or else I shall call you a traitor and false friend.'

But Arcite answered again as angrily: 'You are false, not I, for I loved her first, and you are bound to help me. You thought she was a goddess, not a woman, and so you might worship, but you could not love her, but the moment I saw her I loved her as a man loves a woman, and told my love to you as to my friend and brother. And even if you had loved her first, could I help loving too? for

love is stronger than any rules or laws. Oh, Cousin Palamon, why should we quarrel any more? Surely we are like the two dogs that fought all day for a bone, and then, when they were tired out with fighting, a hawk came and flew off with the bone from between them. We are prisoners here, and no money will buy our freedom, and if we quarrel ever so much, still neither of us will have the chance to win her favour or her pity.'

They often said it was no use to quarrel, but none the less the two cousins grew more jealous of each other day by day.

Now it happened that one day an old friend of Duke Theseus came to see him, and his name was Perithous. He was a great duke like Theseus, and they had been great friends ever since they were little children. Now Perithous had known Arcite, and been a friend to him before Arcite had fallen into prison, when he was a famous young prince in his own home at Thebes. So when Perithous heard of Arcite's bad fortune, he asked Duke Theseus to let him go free. Then Theseus, because of his great friendship with Perithous, gave him what he asked, and said that Arcite should be set free, and that he would ask no money for him; but he warned him that if ever he was found, by night or day, within the kingdom of Athens, his head should be cut off, so let him beware how he came back again.

Do you think Arcite was happy when he heard

he might go free? Ah no—he was full of sorrow, and seemed to feel death in his heart. He groaned and lamented piteously, and at first he watched for a time when he might kill himself.

He said to himself, 'I wish I had never been born; I wish I had never known Perithous; for then I should not have had this misery, or should have lived still in this prison evermore. This prison is better and brighter than the happy fields, for while I am here I can see every morning the lady that I love, and it would have been enough to make me happy to see her every day although she might have never known my name. O dear cousin Palamon,' he said, 'you have won the day;—you may stay on happy in prison—In prison? No, in paradise, for you will see her, and I shall be far away. Fortune is changeable, and you are a strong and noble knight, and by some strange chance you may happen to get all that you desire, because you live so near her; but nothing can comfort me. I am banished for ever. I must despair and die. Not earth, or air, or fire, or anything in the whole wide world, can make me happy again.'

'Ah, why do we complain so of our present state, when God has so often provided for us better than we could provide for ourselves? Many a man has escaped from prison only to be murdered by his own servants when he at last got home. We know not what to pray for. We are no wiser than a drunken man. He knows he has a house, but can-

not find the way, and all the roads seem slippery; —just so we want to be happy, but cannot find the way. In the foolishness of my heart I longed for liberty. I said, "If only I could escape from prison, then I should have all I want," and now I find that my liberty is only banishment. I may not see you, Emily, and that is as bad as death.'

But Palamon, when he knew Arcite was gone, made the great tower of his prison echo to his cries of misery, and wetted with his salt tears the very fetters on his legs. And though Arcite was far away he called aloud, 'Ah, cousin Arcite, after our long quarrel, you have won, and I have lost the prize. You are walking about the streets of Thebes, just where you like, and take no thought of what I suffer here. You, who are such a wise and brave man, can call round you all the bold men of our father's house, and make so sharp a war against this town of Athens and the Duke, that, by some lucky chance in battle, or some treaty, you may win the lady Emily to be your wife, while I weep, and wail, and pine like a caged bird.'

So spoke the knight Palamon, when he thought how Arcite was now a great lord and free. He was so mad and burnt up with jealousy that his face would grow ashy pale, and then he would say: 'O cruel goddess Fortune! we are all your slaves. You take no more count of men than if they were a flock of sheep that huddle in the fold. Men pine in prison, and lie on beds of pain, and pass from

trouble to trouble, and yet they have often done nothing wrong. Why! men are worse off than the beasts, for the beasts may do just what they like, but men for duty's sake must not; and when a beast is dead he has no pain, but men may come to misery both in this world and the next. How God can let this be I cannot tell. I only know the world is full of sorrow, and that many an ugly serpent and many a wicked thief go free, while I who am innocent am left in prison.'

And now let us leave Palamon for awhile, and see how it went with Arcite.

The summer of that year passed by, and the weary winter nights made their sadness doubly sad both for the prisoner and the banished man. Arcite, remembering that he should never see his dear lady any more, did not care for food or drink, and hardly ate enough to keep himself alive. He lay awake in the night thinking of Emily, and had no sleep or rest. He grew lean and hollow-eyed, and pale and wan, and kept by himself alone, and many a night he passed in wandering dismally in the darkness; and if he heard anyone sing softly, or heard sweet music play, then he could not help his tears, he was so weak and sad. He was quite changed from what he used to be, so that nobody could even recognise his voice.

Arcite lived on at Thebes in this unhappiness for a year or two. At last, one night, as he lay sleeping, he thought he saw a beautiful youth come

to his bedside. He wore strange shoes upon his feet, for these shoes had little wings, and seemed to carry him where he liked. In his hand he carried a wand twined round with two thin snakes, and when he shook this wand all creatures slept. On his head he wore a pointed hat, and on the hat, as on the shoes, were little wings. The figure stood by Arcite in the night, and said, 'Arcite, be sad no longer, but go your way to Athens, for there your troubles shall end.'

The moment Arcite heard the words he started from his sleep, but there was no one there. Then Arcite thought. 'It was Mercury, the messenger of heaven, who comes sometimes in dreams. I will obey his word, and go to Athens, and will not dread to die, for I shall see my lady that I love and serve, and where she is it will be sweet to die.' Then a new thought came into his mind, and he caught up a looking-glass, a large round mirror fit for the room of a prince, and saw that the colour had gone from his face, and that by his long illness he looked like another man. So he thought with joy that if he made himself like a poor man he might live in Athens, and no one would know him. Then he might see his lady day by day.

So Arcite lost no time, but clothed himself like some poor labourer, and set out for Athens by the nearest road.

He went alone except for one squire, who knew all his secret, and was clothed poorly like himself.

In due time he came to the Court of Duke Theseus. He stood at the palace gate, and offered to lift or carry for anyone who would hire him. He worked like this as a porter for some time, and because he was wise he soon found out which of the servants of the Court served the Lady Emily. Then he hired himself to be her man, to cut wood and carry water.

Arcite was young and strong, and big-boned, and could do more work than any of his fellows, and yet he was so kind and gentle that no man was jealous of him, but all the other servants loved him, and he grew to be the most famous serving-man in all the Court, and all spoke well of him.

Thus for a year or two, he was the servant of the bright Lady Emily, and he used to say his name was Philostratus, and he was known by none to be a prince. At last his good services and his nobleness grew to be so famous that all the Court said it would be right and gracious of the Duke to put him to more fit and honourable work. And true enough his good deeds and noble speech brought him soon to be the Duke's own squire, and the Duke gave him gold to buy horses and rich clothes, and all that was proper for the squire of so great a man. And besides the gold that Duke Theseus gave him, his own faithful servants brought Arcite plenty of money, year by year, from Thebes; but he spent these riches cunningly and well, and no one wondered why he was so rich.

So for three years Arcite was prosperous and happy, for although he was the humble squire of his greatest foe, he was near to Emily, the lady of his heart; and he bore himself so well in war-time and in peace that Theseus, not knowing who he was, held him in great favour.

All this time the miserable Palamon had lived in the darkness of his strong prison. Almost seven years it was since he had passed through the doorway of that thick tower, and now that Arcite was gone away, his loneliness and his jealousy and his love for Emily were wasting him away, and he was fast falling into madness. But now when the gay spring came round again, the very time when Palamon had first loved Emily, a strange thing happened to him; for in the seventh year of his captivity, in May, on the third night, soon after midnight, he escaped from his prison. A friend at last had come to help him, and Palamon had given his gaoler a draught of wine, drugged with the juices of wonderful leaves, which make those sleep who drink of them. The friend of Palamon had brought this drink from Thebes, and, while the gaoler lay in a deep sleep, this friend helped the prisoner from his chains, and between them they opened the doors of the thick tower. Still the gaoler slept so that no hand could wake him, and Palamon escaped into the night.

As I said, it was past midnight, and the May nights were short, and Palamon felt so strange in

the fresh air and under the stars, and was so overcome with joy and terror, that he did not take the shortest way, and he had not gone far, when he saw the sky grow grey with the coming dawn. He stopped in fear, and listened for the steps of his pursuers, but there was no sound to be heard. The daylight was at hand, and at all costs he must hide himself. He looked all round, and then he went a little way out of the road to a thick grove of trees and bushes, and there he walked up and down in terror waiting for the night to come. He thought, 'I will wait until it is dark again, when no one can know me, and then I will take the way to Thebes, and when I am there I will beg all my friends to help me to make war on Theseus, and I will either win Emily or lose my life.' So thought Palamon as he hid himself among the leafy bushes. He did not know what would befal him soon.

Meanwhile, Arcite must have sometimes remembered Palamon when he looked at the prison tower, but in thinking night and day of Emily he soon almost forgot him; and this very morning, when Palamon was hidden in the grove, Arcite had risen early, fresh and glad, and never knew that before the day was done an end would come to his new happy life.

The busy lark, the messenger of day, had greeted with her song the grey morning, and the fiery sun uprose so bright that the eastern hills seemed to laugh beneath his beams; he rose higher

and higher, and dried up the silver drops that were hanging on the leaves. Arcite rose from his bed, and looked at the clear weather, and thought he would get up early and go a-Maying. So he mounted his fiery horse, and rode out of the city, a mile or two into the sunny fields, until he chanced to remember the grove where Palamon was hidden, and thought he would go there to gather woodbine and hawthorn, and look for early flowers. He rode on gently, singing loud and clear

> May ! May !
> So green and gay,
> With daisies and cuckoo buds all the way,
> Give me, oh, give me some green to-day.

So, when he reached the grove, he leapt from his horse with a merry heart, and merrily sprang into the little wood, and wandered up and down a by-path looking for flowers.

Now Palamon was hidden among thick bushes, and feared for his life when he saw an armed follower of Duke Theseus walking in the wood. He little knew it was Arcite, but kept as still as he could, so as not to stir the leaves. In a little while, Arcite would have gone, and the two cousins might have never met, but alas ! Arcite found it true what wise men have said long ago, 'Field hath eyes and wood hath ears.'

He sung his song about the beauty and the freshness of the May, and when he had finished the last line, and was tired of hunting after flowers,

suddenly he became sad—for lovers have odd ways, and are as changeable as the weather—and sat down to think of his Lady Emily.

He spoke aloud, for he thought he was far from any human ears. 'Alas the day that I was born,' he said. 'How long, how long will God that sits in heaven plague the ancient city of Thebes. Years ago they built it, Cadmus and Amphion, the first of Theban kings; but the royal race of Cadmus is all ruined now. Am I not a prince of that great house? and yet I have sunk to be the poor squire of my mortal foe. I dare not even own my proper name. My father and mother named me Arcite, but now I have to call myself Philostratus, and pass for little better than a beggar. I alone am left of all our noble family, except the wretched Palamon, who wears his life away in Duke Theseus' dungeon tower. And, besides all this, I am dying of a burning love, that torments me night and day. O Emily! Emily! your two bright eyes pierce my heart! I could bear all else easily if only I could help you, or do anything to please you.'

Palamon heard plainly all these words, and felt as if a cold sword had suddenly glided through his heart. Trembling with anger, he started from his hiding-place in the thick bushes, with his face as pale as a dead man, and said: 'Arcite, you false wicked traitor, now you are caught, for you confess that you love my lady, though you are

my cousin and sworn friend. You have tricked Duke Theseus, and serve him under a false name. You shall not love her, my Lady Emily! No man but I shall love her. I am Palamon, your mortal foe, and one of us two must die. I have no sword. I am just escaped from prison by God's help, and yet I make no doubt to kill you presently, unless you will give up Emily.'

Arcite glared at him, and hardly listened to the words he said, but he soon knew Palamon and what he meant, and had in mind their old and bitter quarrel. Then he looked as fierce as any lion, and pulled out his sharp sword, and said: 'Palamon, by God that sits above, I have a mind never to let you go out of this wood alive, only I know that you are mad with love, and have no sword. As for the promise which you say I made to help you in love and in all else,—fool! remember, love is free. Love her I will, for all your threats. But you are a worthy knight, Palamon, and want to win her in fair fight; so now I give you my word, as a true man, that I will come to-morrow to this very place, and bring arms for you and me. You shall choose the best, and leave the worst for me. And I will bring you food and drink and cloths to make a bed for you to-night, and in the morning we will fight for Emily; and if you kill me here, why then you may be welcome to my lady, *for I* shall be dead and cold.'

So they agreed to fight next day, and parted. Palamon stayed hidden in the grove, and Arcite rode back to the town to get all the things which he had promised.

Thus this story shows you that love makes enemies of friends, for a man will have his lady all alone, and love is stronger than friendship or kindred, and is lord of all.

The next morning, before daybreak, Arcite rode out of the city secretly, and on his horse before him he carried swords, and spears, and daggers, and armour, fit for himself and Palamon ; and so he came to the woodside.

Palamon stood there to meet him, but neither spoke a word. They wished no 'good morning' or 'good day,' but looked at each other, and grew red and pale by turns, for each of them thought, 'He or I must die.' Each stood as stands some Indian hunter in a gap, waiting with his spear, who hears the branches crackling and the leaves rustling, and knows a bear or a lion is coming through the wood, and thinks, 'Here comes my mortal enemy, and I must kill him or he me.'

So stood and so thought the two cousins. They helped to arm each other in silence. No one would have imagined they meant to fight to the death, for each helped the other as friendly and carefully as though he were arming his brother to fight against the same enemy side by side,

Then, when all was ready, a dreadful battle began. They thrust at each other with their strong sharp spears. Palamon was like some maddened lion, Arcite like a fierce tiger; or rather they were like two wild boars, that clash their tusks together, frothing with white foam. Now one, now the other got a wound, and the grass under their feet grew red with blood.

The birds were frightened, and forsook the little wood, and these two cousins fought on, while the bright May sun was creeping up the sky, and gilding the quiet leaves above their heads.

Meanwhile, at the royal palace in the city, no one had missed Arcite, but soon after sunrise there was a bustle of servants and a clatter of horses' hoofs, for Duke Theseus rode to hunt the hart every morning in the month of May. Always by break of day he was dressed, and ready to ride with horn and hounds. And so, this morning that I tell about, the Duke rode gaily out. The day was clear, and there rode with him the beautiful Queen Hypolita and her sister Emily, dressed all in green, and many huntsmen and fine ladies with them.

By a strange chance, the Duke rode straight to the very grove where the two Thebans fought. He had been told that a great hart was there, and he thought that he would hunt him with his hounds; but when he came to a clear place among the trees, the Duke saw something glittering, and heard a clashing sound.

The sun was in his face, but he shaded his eyes with his hand, and saw Arcite and Palamon fighting furiously, more like wild beasts than men. Their bright swords went to and fro, giving such hideous blows as would have felled an oak. He did not know who these men were, or why they were fighting, but he spurred his horse and dashed between them with his naked sword, and shouted, 'No more! Death to either of you who strikes another blow. Now, tell me who are you, that dare to fight here without a judge or witness?'

Then Palamon answered hastily: 'Sire, we are both wretches who are tired of our lives; and, indeed, we deserve death, both of us; and I pray you, as you are a just and righteous lord, show us no mercy. Slay me first, for God's sake, but slay my fellow too. Or rather slay him first, for although you do not know him, this is your mortal foe Arcite, whom you banished from your land on pain of death. He came to your palace gate, and called himself Philostratus, and has fooled you so for years that you have made him your chief squire. This is the man that loves the princess, Emily the bright. And now, since the day has come when I too must die, I make my free confession that I am the ill-fated Palamon, who broke from your prison two days ago. Like Arcite, I am your mortal foe, and I love Emily so well that now I count it my best happiness to die here in her sight. I ask for instant judgment, but slay my fellow too, for *we have both* deserved our death.'

The Duke answered shortly, 'Your own mouth has spoken your doom in the hearing of us all. There is no need to have you bound and brought to trial, for now, by the red War-god, I will slay you both.'

Then the fair Hypolita began to cry for pity, and so did Emily and the other ladies, for they thought how that Arcite and Palamon were born great princes, and that their trouble and their death were all for love; and when they saw the two cousins bleeding from their wounds they all begged Duke Theseus to show mercy, and knelt to him, and made such earnest petition that the anger of the Duke died away, for pity quickly comes in noble hearts.

He seemed to see all at once the whole sad story of these cousin princes, and the cause of their offence against him. It was true they had despised his command, baffled his wisdom, and defied his power, and when he thought of this, and how their very fight so near his Court was an insult to his majesty, the Duke's anger was fierce. But soon, as I have said, he had a milder mood, when he remembered that a man will do anything for love, and is sure to get out of prison if he can. And then the entreaties and the tears of the ladies kneeling round him counted for something, for men are always sorry when they see girls and women cry. Duke Theseus remembered too that Palamon had not spoken proudly, and made up

his mind to show that a great and noble lord can regard the humble, and is ready to be merciful. So Theseus looked kindly at the cousins, and spoke loud for all to hear him.

'The Lord of love,' he said, 'is stronger than dukes or kings, for he turns the hearts of men, and no voice nor arm can hinder him; he drives men often to their own destruction, and turns their wisdom into folly.

'Look here on Arcite and Palamon. They were as free as swallows, and had no need to dread my prison any more. They might have lived in Thebes like kings. They knew that I hated them as my enemies, and could kill them if I caught them, and yet they have come to face death here with their eyes wide open. What man is so wise that love cannot make him a fool? See how they bleed. They have been love's servants for years, and he has only paid them with pain; yet no doubt these two knights think themselves wise men. And the strange thing is, that she for whose sake they are so jealous knew no more about it than that cuckoo singing in the wood, and might have never known.

'Ah, well! I was young myself years ago, and have gone through love's folly and pain. I suppose a man must pass through all life's hard and pleasant places, and so I quite forgive you both, at the asking of my queen, and of my dear sister Emily. But you shall swear to me never to make

war on me by night or day, but to be my faithful friends.'

Arcite and Palamon swore the oath, and asked the Duke to forgive their deeds and plots against him, and he forgave them all.

Then Theseus said again: 'Palamon, and you, Arcite, you are both rich and the sons of kings, so that by wealth and birth you are both fit to wed with any lady in the land, even if she were a queen or a princess. But as to my sister Emily, about whom you have been jealous all these years, you know yourselves that you cannot both marry her. One of you must do as best he can without her.

'Now what can I do? I will give you each an even chance of wedding her. Listen, now, how I have determined to end your jealousy and strife. I speak here plainly, that all may hear; and I will hold to what I say, and will end your quarrel. Each of you may have his chance, and God shall rule the issue. I have passed my judgment. I will not alter it. You are both free to go away without ransom or punishment, and on this very day next year, no sooner and no later, you shall come back to this same spot. You shall each bring a hundred knights with you, ready armed for a battle in the lists, and you shall fight for Emily. Whichever of you first kills the other, or drives him from the lists, or takes him prisoner, he shall have the Princess Emily. As I said, the lists shall be in this place, where I have found

you fighting, and as I shall judge fairly between you, so may God judge me. What do you think of my purpose?'

Oh to see the gladness on the face of Palamon, and how Arcite sprang up for joy! The queen and the other ladies, and the knights who rode with them, all praised the goodness of the Duke, and there was a loud murmur of delighted voices. I do not know all the thoughts of the Princess Emily, but she was glad that the young knights were not to be killed. Arcite and Palamon thanked Theseus on their knees with all their heart many times, and then at last they took their leave, and full of hope, with glad hearts and glad faces, they rode homewards in the sun together until they came to the great grey walls of Thebes.

Soon near the once solitary grove there was the sound of workmen working and talking all the summer days, and when the winter came they had made a wonderful place fit for the fight that was to be in the next spring-time. There was a space of smooth grass a mile round closed in by a stone wall and a ditch. They made sixty great steps going up and up to the top of the wall from the inside, so that the people could sit on the steps and look over the heads of those who sat below them, and see all that was going on in the great grassy space. In the east, towards the sunrise, they made a great gateway of white marble, and another towards the sunset, in the west, and on

the top of these white gateways there were two wonderful buildings, which I will tell you about, and another on the north side of the wall. There was not a clever man in all the land to make and build, or paint pictures, or carve things in wood and stone, that Theseus did not bring to work for him. He gave them plenty to eat and drink, and wages besides.

Above the gateway, on the eastern side, was a temple built to Venus, the queen of love. Inside this temple the walls were painted with figures and pictures of strange tales. There were pictures of men and women waking and weeping in the night time all for love, pictures of lovers' troubles, of their beauty and their pleasure, and their hope and rashness. Some were painted speaking flattery and lies, others with young and hopeful faces. There was a picture, too, of Jealousy, painted like a woman wearing a garland of the yellow marigold, and a cuckoo sitting on her hand. All this and more was painted in honour of the great goddess Venus, queen of love, and because it was through love that Arcite and Palamon had been brought to fight for Emily. Then on the wall was painted the mountain of Venus, where most she loved to dwell, and her gardens and her pleasure houses. Nor was the porter left out, whose name was Idleness. And there were pictures of great men of old times, who had gone through sorrow and danger for their lady loves. There was Solomon, who had so many

wives, strong Hercules and rich Crœsus, Medea, who slew her babes, and Circe, who turned her lovers to swine, and all manner of people whom you will one day hear about. All this was to show that love is stronger than beauty, wisdom, wealth, or power. In the middle of the temple, glorious to see, was the statue of Venus, floating in the wide waters half covered by the clear green waves. In her right hand she had a little lute, and on her head a wreath of roses fresh and sweet, and overhead fluttered her doves. Beside his mother stood her little blind son Cupid, with wings upon his shoulders, and his bow and arrows in his hands.

This was the temple above the eastern gate, and on the western gate was another, as I said, built in honour of the war-god Mars. It was a copy of the great temple which stood in the frosty North, and on the wall inside was a picture of this strange far temple. There you might see a desolate forest, a place so horrible that no man nor beast could live there. The trees were grey with age, with branches knotted and gnarled and bare of leaves, and their trunks were jagged and hideous to behold. And through this forest a moaning wind strained and stirred as if it would crash every bough.

There under a hill stood the temple of Mars wrought of burnished steel. The entrance was long and strait and ghastly, and from it came a raging blast, which shook the gates, although these gates

were strong and crossed with iron clamps. The temple had no window, and was all dark, but that the northern light shone in at the door. The iron pillars of this dreadful house were like huge tuns, and shone as glass. There were painted all the sights that most please the cruel god ; anger red as fire, robbers and white frightened faces. There was the assassin smiling falsely with his knife under his cloak. There were ships burning, with black smoke, and dead men with gaping mouths. There was a madman laughing in his rage ; there was a corpse with its throat cut lying in the bushes ; a carter crushed beneath the wheels ; a huntsman strangled by a bear ; a fierce sow devouring a little child as it lay in its cradle, and horrible sights more than you could think of. There was a great conqueror sitting on his throne, but above his head a sharp sword hung by a single thread.

Many deaths of famous men were painted there—of Cæsar, and Nero, and Anthony, and many more.

The statue of Mars himself stood in a chariot, armed, and grim, and over his head there shone two stars, and beneath his feet stood a red-eyed wolf devouring a man.

All this was inside the second of the three temples which Duke Theseus made around the battle-place. But there was another temple, as I said, upon the north side of the wall, and this was built in honour of Diana, the queen of hunting,

and the guardian of young maidens. This temple was made of alabaster and red coral, and the walls were painted with pictures of the woeful things which this bright goddess had done to those who had not paid her due honour.

There was the picture of Callist changed into a bear, and Daphne turned to a laurel. There was painted, too, the tale of the young hunter named Actæon, who peeped through the bushes, and saw the goddess bathing in a pool. He did not guess how she would punish him for looking, till he suddenly felt hard horns sprouting from his forehead. He was forced to drop upon his hands, and in a moment he was changed into a stag, and ran in terror through the wood. He ran, but he could not escape, for his own hounds caught and tore him in pieces, for they could not know their master any more. That was the tale of Actæon.

There was Atalanta, too, hunting the wild boar, before she had ever seen the golden apples or run her final race. There is no time to tell all the stories of old times which covered the walls of this third temple that Theseus made, but in the middle of it was the goddess-maid herself, the great Diana, riding on a hart. Her statue was clothed in palest green, and round her feet were carved her little hounds. Beneath her feet was a crescent moon. Her bow was on her shoulder, and her arrows in their case.

The lists and the three temples were finished,

and cost more money than you could count or think of, and Theseus was well pleased with them.

And now the time of May was coming round again, and everybody, both in town and country, talked all day about the coming fight, for the fame of it had gone through all the land.

Faithfully, before the appointed day, Arcite and Palamon came back to Athens, each with his hundred knights, and every man and woman, and girl and boy, ran out to look at them. All the brave and noble men in the world had heard the tale of the two cousins and their sweet lady love, and had begged to fight on one side or the other, and many a one had ridden sorrowfully away because a stronger or more skilful knight had been chosen instead of him; for be sure that Arcite and Palamon chose the best men they could. Those chosen were very proud and glad. They came from many distant lands, and they had strange weapons, and no two were armed alike.

The chief of the knights who came with Palamon was Lycurgus, the mighty king of Thrace. He had a manly face, with a black beard. His great eyeballs glared like a wild beast's, half yellow and half red, and he looked like a lion with his matted hair hanging over his brow. He was large of limb and broad-shouldered, and his arms were long and round. He stood, after the manner of his country, high on a golden car, drawn by four

milk-white bulls, and wore for a surcoat the skin of a bear, as black as coal. His long hair curled behind his back as dark and glossy as a raven's feather; and a golden crown was on his head, thick and heavy, and blazing with rubies and diamonds. Round his car ran a score of deer hounds, with muzzles and collars of gold, each as big as a calf, fit to hunt the lion or bear.

This king of Thrace came to fight for Palamon, and a hundred lords, with stout hearts, came with him.

With Arcite, too, there came a hundred knights, and chief among them rode Emetrius, king of India, on a bay horse with steel trappings, and covered with cloth of gold. He wore a coat over his armour, embroidered with large round pearls, and his saddle was of burnished gold, fresh from the workman's hammer. Upon his shoulder hung a short cloak, set with rubies, which sparkled like fire. His yellow hair was crisp, with curls, and glittered like the sun. His nose was hooked, and his eyes tawny; his lips were round, and his face was ruddy, with a freckle here and there. He seemed about five and twenty, for his beard was grown. His voice was loud and clear, like a trumpet. On his head was a crown of green laurel, and on his fist he carried a tame eagle, as white as any lily. A hundred lords, as I said, rode with Arcite, bareheaded, richly armed. Many a duke, and earl, and king, besides Emetrius, were

gathered there to fight in honour of this noble lover, and round the King Emetrius there ran lions and leopards tame as dogs.

So, on a Sunday, all these knights, with Arcite and Palamon, came riding early into Athens, and were the guests of Theseus, who lodged and feasted them most royally. I have no time to tell of the rich array of Theseus' palace, or who sat first or last in hall, what ladies were fairest or danced most gracefully, or who told the sweetest tales of love, while their bright-eyed hawks looked down from their perches, and the hounds lay watching their masters from the floor.

That Sunday night, before it was day, Palamon lay awake. Although it was two hours before dawn, the lark was singing; and as soon as Palamon heard her earliest notes, he rose with a brave heart to go to the temple of Venus, which I have told you of. He went into the temple, and there he knelt down and humbly prayed, and said: 'O Lady Venus, fairer than all mortal women, you are a goddess, and yet you have felt the pain of love. You shed bitter tears over your dear Adonis, when he was gored by the wild boar. Have pity, then, upon *my* tears, and hear my prayer. You know what I desire, though I have no words to tell you my trouble. I do not care for victory, or for a soldier's glory. I only ask for Emily, to have her for my own. Let *him* have victory, if only I may have Emily. Hear me, O Venus, great god-

dess of love. But if that cannot be, sweet lady, let me die soon. Let Arcite kill me to-morrow, and then let him marry her. I shall not care or know; I shall be dead in my grave.'

So prayed Palamon, and paid the proper sacrifices, and left nothing undone of all the strange customs and ceremonies; but as yet there was no sign that his prayer was heard. At last he saw the statue of Venus shake, and there came a sign which made him glad, for he thought, 'No matter if it did not come at first. I have waited so long in my life, I can wait now. Sooner or later I shall get my wish.' So he went home content.

Meanwhile, the sun had risen, and with the sun rose Emily, and went with her maidens to the temple of Diana. They brought with them fire and incense, and all things needful for the due ceremonies. Then the Princess Emily washed herself in pure well water. Her bright hair was brushed smooth, and hung unbound, and her women placed upon her head a crown of young oak leaves.

She lighted two fires, and when the flames burnt clear, she prayed, and said: 'Pure goddess of the greenwood, queen of earth and sky, and of the dark places underground, I have been your true maiden many a year. You know what I desire. Be not angry with me as you were with Actæon, who deserved his death. I should like to be a maiden all my life, and not to love a man or be a bride. I would rather hunt the stag, and walk in

the wild woods. Now help me, lady, and grant me what I ask for. As for Palamon my lover, and Arcite who loves me too, I pray you to send love and peace between them, and turn their hearts from me. Let all their hot love for me be quenched, or make them love some other maid. But if you will not grant me this, and I must have one of these two princes, give me to him who loves me best.'

While Emily thus spoke, the two fires she had lit as a sign of her two lovers were burning clearly, but suddenly she saw a wonderful sight. One of the fires was quenched for a moment, and then burnt bright again, and afterwards the other fire was put out with a hissing sound, as if the sticks were wet, and from the ends of the sticks there ran drops of blood. Emily was almost beside herself with fright, and sobbed and cried most piteously. She did not know what it all meant, but she cried for fear. Thereupon, she saw a figure coming towards her, dressed like a huntress with a bow in her hand, who said:—

'Daughter, do not be sorrowful. The gods have determined that you shall marry one of the two, but I must not tell you which. You have seen what befel the fires, and will one day understand. Farewell, I may not stay.'

With these words the goddess turned to go. The arrows on her shoulder clattered and rang, and she vanished no one could tell where.

Emily was filled with wonder. 'I put myself under thy protection, great goddess,' she said ; and so she went home again the nearest way.

Next Arcite went to make his prayer to fiery Mars. He walked to the temple, and made his offerings, and said :—

'O, strong God, Lord of the black North! You hold all nations in check as it were with a bridle, and give the battle as you please. Accept my humble sacrifice. Remember my youth and my strength, which I devote to you. You too have felt love's pain when you loved the fair queen Venus ; then pity mine, for I am young and ignorant, and desperate with love if ever man was. She whom I love cares not a bit whether I sink or swim, and I know well she will not have mercy on me unless I win her by strength, and my own strength avails not without your help and grace.

'Then help me, lord, in the battle-place to-morrow, and give me victory. I will take all the toil, the glory shall be all yours. I will hang my banner in your temple, with all the arms of the great knights who fight for me, and I will keep burning before you a perpetual fire until the day I die. And this, too, I promise. My beard and my long hair that never yet has felt the razor or the shears, I will cut off in your honour, and be your true servant all my days. Give me victory, I ask no more.'

The prayer of Arcite was over, and hark! the

iron rings upon the temple doors began to clatter, and the doors to shake, so that Arcite, for all his strength and courage, felt afraid. The fire upon the god's altar burnt so brightly that the dark temple was filled with light. A sweet smell rose from the ground, and at last the armour on the statue of Mars began to sound and ring, and amidst the sound was heard a murmur, low and dim, saying, 'Victory,' and then all was still. Glad and hopeful was Arcite, and came back as merry as a bird in the bright sunshine.

How should the promises of all these gods come true? The gods who lived on the clear mountain-tops of Greece, above the silver clouds, and who wandered at dawn in the lonely glades, where flowers sprang under their feet, or strayed in the blue spaces of the air, and made their palaces behind the skies of sunset;—these gods in bygone times dealt strangely with men. They quarrelled among themselves just as men do, and had each their own favourites, and Jupiter, who was their king, had much to do to settle their quarrels, and keep them all at peace.

And now you shall hear the end of all this tale.

Great was the feast in Athens all that Monday, and all went to rest that night, meaning to be up early on the morrow to see the famous fight. And on the morrow, at daybreak, there was the clatter of horses everywhere, and the ring of iron arms, and horsemen came riding to the palace on their

chargers and palfreys. Then you might see strange armour with wonderful work of inlaid gold and steel, bright shields and helmets, coats made of iron rings, and embroidered cloaks; lords and knights and squires making spears ready and buckling helmets on, and fitting shields with thongs. All were busy to a man. Horses were pawing the ground and champing their golden bits, armourers were spurring to and fro with file and hammer, to rivet on the armour, and servants with short sticks in their hands were running about on foot as thick as flies.

You might hear the sound of trumpets and clarions and pipes. The palace was full of people hurrying up and down, or standing about in knots, talking of the battle, and discussing whether they thought Arcite would win or Palamon. 'Ah,' said one, 'you will see that the black-bearded knight will win.' 'No,' said another, 'look at the fair-haired knight—I hold by him.' 'Ah, but the other looks so fierce and grim, and his battle-axe must weigh twenty pounds.' So everywhere throughout the hall they guessed and wondered how the fight would go.

Duke Theseus was the only man that was not up at daybreak. He lay sleeping until the music and the noise at last awoke him, but even then he did not come from his rich chamber until he heard that the two Theban princes had been brought to the palace with equal honour. Then he came

and sat down at an open window in rich robes. The people pressed to see him, and pay him reverence, and hear what he decreed. High on a platform stood the herald of the Duke, and called to the people to be still until there was a great silence, and then he gave out what Theseus had decreed.

'The Duke,' he said, 'of his wisdom and mercy has considered that it would be too great a loss for noble knights to fight in this quarrel to the death. Therefore, to save their lives, he has altered his first purpose. Therefore, hear. No man upon pain of death shall shoot another in this fight, nor bring into the lists any axe or knife or any short sword for stabbing. No man shall ride against another with a sharp spear more than once; after one fall he must fight on foot. And once a man is fallen and disabled he shall not be killed, but be made prisoner, and dragged to the stakes that are at each end of the ground, and there he must stay until the fight be done. And if Arcite or Palamon is slain or dragged to the stake, then all shall stop fighting; that shall make an end. Go now and fight your fill with sword and mace.'

So spoke the herald, and the people shouted, so that the sound went far into the sky, and they praised the goodness of the Duke for his care to prevent bloodshed.

Trumpets and all kinds of music began to play, and the company rode out in a grand procession through the streets, which were hung with cloth of

gold. Duke Theseus rode first, like the great lord he was, and Palamon and Arcite were on either side of him. After them rode the queen and Emily, and after them other noble ladies, and then the knights, in their proper rank and order. All took their places in the seats round the place of battle except the two hundred that were to fight that day. These went in two parties. Arcite and his hundred passed with red banners in through the gate of Mars in the west, while Palamon and his hundred with white banners came through the gate of Venus in the east.

Both sides were ranged in a long line facing each other, longing to begin, while their names were read aloud, and their number counted. Then the gates were shut, and the busy herald drew aside. The trumpet and clarion rang. Each knight put his spear in rest, and struck spurs into his steed. Tough ash shafts were shivered on shields. Up sprung the tall spears twenty feet in air. Sword blades flashed like silver; helmets were hewn and hacked, and the red blood ran. One thrust through the thick of the throng—steeds stumbled and fell. Another rolled on the ground, or stood fighting on foot with his truncheon. Another was hurt in the body, and borne struggling to the stake.

Now and then Theseus made a sign to stop, while the knights rested and refreshed themselves, and then they fought on fiercer than ever.

Many a time that day the two Thebans met

Each had struck the other from his horse, and they never met without one being wounded. No tiger robbed of her whelp was fiercer than Arcite, and Palamon was as savage as a hunted lion mad with hunger. Their strokes fell thick upon each other's head, and both were red with their own blood.

But all things have an end, and before the sun sank in the west the strong King Emetrius came against Palamon, as he was fighting with Arcite, and wounded him, and by the force of twenty knights Palamon was at last dragged to the stake. He would not yield, and in trying to rescue him King Lycurgus was struck down. It was a noble struggle. Palamon before he was taken hit Emetrius so hard that he struck him a sword's length from his saddle, but all for nothing; Palamon's bold heart could not save him. He was carried to the stake, and could fight no more, but sat down in sorrow.

When Theseus saw that Palamon was taken, he cried, 'Ho! enough of fighting. I will be a true judge, and favour none. Arcite of Thebes shall marry Emily, for he has had the fortune to win her fairly.'

Then the people began to shout in honour of Arcite, and for joy that the princess had been fairly won, until the murmur and the uproar rose so loud and high that it seemed the very walls would fall. Alas! what can fair Venus do for her own knight, whose prayer she granted, but who now *lies helpless* watching the triumph of Arcite.

The trumpets blew, and the minstrels played in honour of the conqueror. The joyous heralds proclaimed his praises with loud voices. Arcite took off his helmet and spurred across the field bare-headed, looking proudly upwards at his Emily. And she looked down and gave him back kind glances, for most women take the lucky side, and love those who win.

Thus Arcite was at the height of his happiness, when suddenly there seemed to come from the ground a flashing of fire, and his horse swerved, started aside, and fell, and Arcite was thrown upon his head, and lay like one dead, his breast broken against his saddle-bow. His face turned as black as a coal, and they had to bear him home to Theseus' palace. There they cut his armour off him, and laid him quickly and gently on a bed, he calling always on the name of Emily, for, hurt as he was, his reason and his memory had not failed.

In spite of this ill-fortune, Theseus and the other knights rode back to Athens with pomp and gladness, for Theseus would not let them all be sad because of Arcite's fall. 'Arcite will get well again,' they said; besides, they all rejoiced because not a knight was killed. They were all bruised and wounded, one knight especially, whose breast bone had been struck through with a spear, but still none was slain, and they put salves upon their wounds, and drank medicine made of herbs, to make them well.

The Duke praised them all, and made a great feast for these noble visitors, as it was right he should. And no one thought it a shame for any knight to have been dragged to the stake, for a fall is only bad luck, and no man could be thought a coward when he did not yield but was dragged along, twenty against one, all clinging to his arm or foot. So Theseus made proclamation that there should be no taunts or jealousy, for all had fought bravely, and should now be like brothers. And after three days' feasting the knights rode back to their homes, and the Duke himself honoured them with his company till they had passed the city gates, and so they all bade good-by.

But Arcite grew worse and worse, and no doctor could cure his wound; and at last he knew that he must die. So he sent for Emily and his cousin Palamon, whom he still loved in his heart. And when they were come to his bedside, he turned his eyes on Emily, and said: 'I had thought to tell the long tale of my past sorrows to you, Emily, for I love you more than all the world, but now I am too weak and sad. I think that even when I am dead my ghost will love you. Oh what misery I have gone through for you, so long, so many years! And now I must die, my Emily, and leave you, my heart's queen, my wife. I have lived so long only for you, and I now am dying for you. This world is a sad place at the best. One day a man is with his love, the next in his cold grave, all

alone, with no one to comfort him. Farewell, my sweet, farewell my Emily! Put your two arms softly round me, and listen to what I say. I have had a bitter quarrel with cousin Palamon many a day for love of you, but I call God to witness that there is no man so worthy to be loved as he, so brave and honourable, so wise and humble. He is of royal blood too, and I know that he will never cease to love you. If ever you marry, marry gentle Palamon.'

Here his voice failed him, for his limbs grew cold in death; but still his dim eyes were fixed on Emily, his last word was her name.

I cannot tell the grief of Emily and Palamon when they saw that the brave spirit of Arcite had left his body. Emily cried both night and day, for women almost always cry thus when their lovers or their husbands die, and if they could not cry as much as they desire they would be sure to fall ill and die in the end. Young and old in Athens wept for Arcite. Theseus himself could not be cheerful any more until his old father came to comfort him.

They dressed the dead knight in cloth of gold, and laid his bright sword in his hand, and carried him gently through the city, and a long train of mourners followed him. They brought him sadly to the little wood where he had met Palamon. It was still as sweet and green as on the day when Arcite had sat under the boughs and thought of

his love. There Theseus had made them build a great pile of wood heaped with spices and all manner of rich things, and they laid the body of Arcite upon it with love and reverence. Then Emily, crying all the time, set fire to the wood, and Arcite was burnt to ashes, as was the custom of that country. It was the grandest and costliest funeral that was ever known. * * * * *

Years went by, and Arcite was still held in honourable memory, though all except Palamon and Emily had long ceased to grieve for him. At last it happened that Duke Theseus wished to make a treaty of friendship with the Thebans. So he sent for Palamon to come to a great council held at Athens, and Palamon came sadly, still wearing his black clothes in mourning for Arcite. Emily, too, sat in the council-room. After a long silence in the hall, Theseus spoke, and said: 'All things have an end. The great oaks that live for centuries at last decay and fall, and even the hard stones wear beneath our feet; rivers run dry, and cities pass away. We should not mourn, then, too long for Arcite, who only went from us a little before his time. We may think him happy to have died at the height of his glory.

'Take pity, Emily, on your own knight Palamon. He is a royal prince, and even had he been poor

and humble, still you should pity him who has served you so faithfully.' Then Theseus called Palamon to come near, and made him take Emily's hand, and she looked on his pale face with love and pity.

So, as Arcite had wished upon his death-bed, Palamon at last married Emily, and they loved each other tenderly, and lived in great honour all their lives.

THE MAN OF LAW.

THE MAN OF LAW'S TALE.

WHEN the Knight had told his tale, all, both young and old, agreed that it was a noble story, and worthy to be had in memory, and most of all the gentlefolks admired it. Our Host laughed out, and cried, 'Bravo! this is a good start; we've opened our budget of stories, now let us see who shall tell the next. Come, Sir Monk, see whether you don't know a tale to match the Knight's.'

But the Miller, who was so drunk that he could hardly keep his seat, called out in a gruff voice, 'Don't think to put me on one side. I'm as good a man as any one of you. I can tell a noble tale, quite a match for the Knight's.'

Our Host saw that he had had too much ale, and said, 'Bide a bit, my good friend Robin; some better man shall tell us another first; let us have everything regular.'

'By the Lord,' answered the Miller, 'not I; either I speak or I go.'

'Tell on,' cried the Host, 'and the de'il take you. You're a fool, you're drunk.'

'Well, then,' said the Miller, 'listen, one and all. But, first, I must protest that I am drunk. I know it as well as you, and therefore if I make any slips or blunders, you must put it down to the Southwark ale.'

Thereupon, he began a tale of a carpenter and his wife, and how the carpenter was cheated by a clerk. It was a vulgar tale, and not a bit like the Knight's, but still it was full of fun, and all the company laughed at it more or less. Oswald the Reeve was the only one who kept a glum face. He was by trade a carpenter, and was a little sore because the carpenter was made fun of in the tale. 'If I cared to talk such low stuff,' he said, 'I could tell a tale of a miller who was cheated worse than the carpenter. But I am too old for such trifling; look at my white pate, and you may read my age. We old men are like medlars that grow worse and worse till they are laid in the ground and rot. I am like a barrel which is nearly run dry, for on the day I was born death tapped the cask of life, and now nothing but the dregs remain.'

But the Host soon put a stop to his prosing. 'What! are you going to give us a sermon?' he cried. 'Whoever heard of a Reeve turning parson; you've mistaken your calling, as the cobbler did when he took to mending legs and arms. On with your story; it's high time, for we're just at Deptford, and it's half-past seven o'clock.'

Thus *pressed*, the Reeve began his story about a

Trumpington miller, who was cheated by two Cambridge students, and so he paid the Miller back.

The tales were good of their kind, but not such as you would care to hear, so I will leave them out, and repeat the tale which I heard from the Lawyer, whose turn came next. When he was called upon by the Host, he answered, 'I acknowledge my debt, and will do my best to pay it. But I warn you that you must expect no poetry from me. That's the trade of our friend Dan Chaucer. He's a poet, and has written in verse (though his rhymes are not always of the best) the stories of a host of noble women. My trade is to talk prose, and so you must put up with a plain prose tale.' Then, without more ado, he began the tale of Constance.

CONSTANCE.

IN Syria there dwelt, in former days, a company of wealthy merchants who dealt in spices and cloth of gold and rich satins. They sent their wares all over the world, and were so honest and true, and had such good things to sell, that everyone was glad to have dealings with them.

Now it fell upon a time that certain of these merchants determined to travel to Rome, either on pleasure or on business, I know not which.

While they were at Rome, they heard on every hand the fame of the emperor's daughter Constance. And this was what they heard people say: 'Our Emperor of Rome has a daughter so fair and *so good that* the like of her has not been since the

world began. Would to God she were Queen of all Europe! She is beautiful and yet not proud, young and yet not foolish, a princess and yet humble. She is a pattern to all women for courtesy, and thinks of nothing but to do others good; she is large in her charities, and her heart is a very temple of holiness.' And all this they said of her was the simple truth.

But to go back to our merchants. They did their business in Rome, and laded their ships, and made ready to go home; but you may be very sure that they did not go without first getting a sight of the lovely Princess.

Now it happened that these merchants stood high in the favour of the Sultan of Syria. Whenever they returned from any strange country, he would graciously send for them and feast them royally, and then make them tell him all the wonderful things that they had seen in their travels.

This time, of course, their heads were full of the Lady Constance, and they told all they had heard, and what a lovely lady she was; and their description of her made the Sultan fall in love with her, though he had never seen her.

So he sent for his counsellors, and told them the tale he had heard, and asked them to help him with their advice. 'For,' said he, 'unless I can get Constance for my wife, and that soon, I might as well be dead.'

The counsellors could not agree among them-

selves; some said one thing, and some another. Some thought he was bewitched to love the maiden so; some whispered he was mad; but they all were obliged to confess that some way must be found for the Sultan to marry Constance. But this was only the beginning of the difficulty; for the Sultan, you know, was a Mohamedan, and the Emperor of Rome a Christian, and it was not likely that a Christian prince would let his child marry a follower of the Prophet.

But when they made these objections, the Sultan answered, 'I pray you hold your peace. I would rather turn Christian than lose Constance. I must be hers; I can love no other. O my good lords! find out some way by which I may get her, and save my life; for I cannot endure much longer my present woe.'

So ambassadors were sent to Rome, and treaties were talked over, and the famous Crusaders were consulted, and the Pope himself was called in, and the end of it all was that an agreement was come to. The Sultan and all his nobles consented to be christened, and on these terms the Emperor promised to give him his daughter for wife, and to pay a certain sum of gold as her portion, I do not know how much. God save thee, poor Constance!

Now, you will expect me to tell you all the preparations that the Emperor made for his daughter's marriage. Bishops and lords and ladies were *chosen to go* with her, and all the people of Rome

were asked to pray for her who was going to marry in a far country.

Soon the day for her departure came, and she and all her companions made ready to go. Constance rose that morning sad and pale, and dressed herself for her journey. She knew that she must go; but it grieved her to the heart to leave her friends at home. Can you wonder that she wept? She was leaving her parents, who had nursed her so tenderly, and going to a strange people, to obey a husband of whom she knew nothing. A husband may be as bad as bad can be, but a wife has to make the best of him, and make believe that she thinks him the best of men.

No wonder then that Constance was sad at the thought of marriage, and wept when she bid her parents farewell. 'Good-by, dear father,' she said, 'and good-by, dear mother, whom I love above everything—except my Saviour who died on the Cross for me. Your wretched child Constance, your darling daughter, whom you have brought up so tenderly, is going to leave you. Fare you well! I shall never see you again. Alas! you have told me that I must go to live among the savage men; and since you tell me, I must not disobey. May Christ give me grace to do His will! Alas! no one will care if I am miserable, for it seems natural for women to suffer and be the slaves of men.'

But oh! what lamentation and weeping there was in her chamber when the hour itself came for

her to go. When they came to tell her it was time to go on board, she could hardly tear herself from her mother's arms. 'Farewell,' they cried from the shore, 'farewell, fair Constance!' and she, standing on the deck, tried to put on a cheerful face, and, smiling through her tears, cried back, 'Jesu Christ be with you all.'

Now the Sultan's mother, Queen Donegild, was a wicked woman, and when she heard what her son meant to do, and how he was going to change his religion, she sent for her ministers. And when they had come together she said to them, 'You know, my lords, that my son is going to do away with the holy Koran, the book of laws which God gave to our Prophet. But for myself I had sooner die than disobey Mahomet's law. And think of this, too: if we accept this new religion, we shall be slaves to the Christians in this world, and be tortured for our unfaithfulness in the next. But, my lords, if you will promise me to listen to my advice, I promise you that you shall suffer no harm.'

Then they all agreed, and promised to stand by her in life and death, and to try and get all their friends to join them. Then the Sultaness explained to them her plan; and it was this: 'Let us,' she said to them, 'first pretend to become Christians—a few drops of cold water will do none of us any harm. And when the baptism is over, I will make *a feast* for the Sultan which shall pay him off for

the insult he has offered to us and to our religion. For, though his Christian bride have been washed as white as snow, she had need bring with her many fonts of water to wash away the red of that feast.'

Then the Sultaness sent her ministers secretly away, and afterwards she went herself to the Sultan, and told him that she was ready to give up her old faith and to be made a Christian by the priests; for it grieved her that she had been so long a heathen. And she went on to entreat the Sultan to let her have the honour of feasting these Christian men, and, if he would grant her this request, she promised she would do her best to please them. The Sultan was so rejoiced that he hardly knew what to say, but knelt at her feet, and thankfully accepted her offer. The Sultaness kissed her son, and took her way home, well pleased with her day's work.

Soon after, the ship bearing the Princess and all her train of followers reached Syria. The Sultan sent messengers, first to his mother, and then to all the noblest of his subjects, telling them that his bride was surely come, and praying them to ride and meet her, and welcome their future Queen with due honours.

So, when the Romans and Syrians met, there was a crowd of gay courtiers, and the wicked old Sultaness was there in splendid robes, and she embraced the Princess as warmly as though she were

her own child, and they all rode together in a grand procession to the city nearest to the harbour. And there they were met by the Sultan himself, riding with all his royal guards, and he leapt from his horse to greet his dear princess, and kissed her, and led her to his palace, and that evening they all feasted and made merry.

The next day was the day fixed for the feast which, as I told you, the old Sultaness was to make. All the Christians, young and old, came to the feast. It was a splendid banquet, and I cannot describe to you all the dainty dishes that were set before them. But alas! they paid dearly for their merriment.

Have you never noticed how often tears follow laughter, how often when you are merriest some misfortune comes to spoil all the fun? So it proved in this case; for while they were all eating and drinking and making merry, while they were still sitting at table, they were all stabbed and slain by the assassins of the wicked Sultaness and her friends. The Sultan, the Syrians who had turned Christian, the Christians themselves, every one of them was slain.

Of all that company Constance alone escaped. Her they seized and carried off to a boat that was ready waiting for her. There was food enough on board, and clothes, and the treasures which she had brought with her, but there were no sailors to row, and never a sail or oar or rudder. And so they

sent her adrift, and told her mockingly to find her way back again to Italy as best she could. Poor Constance, may Heaven have mercy on you, for men have none!

So she found herself alone on the wide sea with none to pity or to aid her, and she cried bitterly. But even in her despair she called upon her Saviour: 'O Christ,' she prayed, 'O Lamb of God, who didst die on the cross for the sins of the whole world, save me.'

Years and days passed by, and still the boat drifted on across the waste of waters, and still she lived, though often she prayed for death to deliver her. Truly it was a miracle that she did not perish. 'How was it,' you may well ask, 'that she was not slain outright with the others at the feast?' Let me answer your question by asking you another. Who was it that delivered Daniel alone from the mouth of the lions when they broke the bones of all the others, or ever they came to the bottom of the den? Truly God's ways are past understanding, and He doeth marvellous things that we may see His mighty works and believe in Him.

And when she had escaped from the feast, who kept her from drowning in the sea? Who kept Jonah in the whale's belly till he was cast up at Nineveh? Who kept the children of Israel so that they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land? Who was it that cried with a loud voice to the four angels who hold the four winds, east, west, and

south, and north, saying, 'Hurt not the earth, neither the sea, nor the trees?' It was the same God that kept this woman safe, both waking and sleeping.

And where did she get meat and drink to last her for three years and more? The same God fed her who fed his prophet Elijah for forty days and forty nights in the wilderness; the same Christ who fed the five thousand with five loaves and two small fishes.

And so she drifted on and on till she came to the narrow straits which divide the Great Sea from our western ocean, and still the boat drove on till at last it was cast up by the waves on the Northumbrian coast, beneath a great rock on which stood a castle. And the boat lay fast embedded in the sand, and the tide ebbed and flowed again, and yet it never stirred. It was God's will that it should stay there.

The Constable, who lived in the castle above, saw it, and came down to look at the wreck; and he searched the boat, and in it found the treasures and the poor lady, who was lying at the bottom of the boat faint and half dead; and when she saw him she besought him to put an end to her life and deliver her from her misery. But the Constable raised her up, and carried her to land; and when she felt once more the firm ground beneath her feet, she knelt down and thanked God for his goodness.

They questioned her, and tried to find out from

her who she was, and whence she came; but however much they pressed her, they could not make her tell. 'I am very weak,' she said, 'and so dazed by the sea and my long travel that I have forgotten everything.' The Constable was a kind-hearted man, and pitied her, and took her home to his wife, and she lived with them. Soon she grew stronger, and was able to repay their kindness by waiting on them; and she was so diligent, and had such winning ways, that all who looked on her loved her.

Now the Constable, whose name was Elda, and his wife Hermengild were heathen, as were all the people round. But Hermengild loved Constance dearly, and wondered at her gentleness and patience. She noticed that she often sought to be alone; and whenever she went to her chamber she found Constance on her knees, and she asked her to whom she prayed. And then Constance told Hermengild of a Saviour's love, and how He had died for her, and still watched over her and preserved her; and it was not long before she persuaded Hermengild to be a Christian.

One bright summer's day the Constable and his wife went out to take a walk on the shore, and Constance was with them. On the way they met a blind man. This blind man was a Christian, one of the few who were left behind in that country when all that worshipped Christ were driven out by their heathen conquerors. But though this man was blind, yet he must have seen with the mind's eye,

as the saying is, for he recognised Hermengild, and seemed to know all about her, and as she passed him he cried out, 'In the name of Christ, dame Hermengild, give me my sight again.' The lady was frightened, for she feared that her husband would find out that she was a Christian, and slay her, as he had slain so many Christians before. But Constance bade her be bold and confess Christ, and she took heart, and told her husband that she was a Christian, and explained to him how Christ had once healed a blind beggar like this man, and much more of the Gospel story, and before evening came she had persuaded her husband to be a Christian.

So Constance was even happier than before, but alas! this happiness was but short—new trials were in store for her. There was a young knight living near the castle, who had seen Constance as she walked by the shore; and at the first sight he fell madly in love with her beauty, and having found means to address her, he tried to persuade her to leave her kind friends and run away with him. When Constance would have nothing to do with him, his false love quickly turned to hate, and he laid a foul plot against her.

One night, when the Constable was away, he managed to get into the castle, and stole into the room where Hermengild and Constance were sleeping. He crept on tiptoe to Hermengild's bed, and at a blow he cut her throat through, and laid the bloody knife by Constance' side, and went his way.

Soon after the Constable came home again, and saw his wife foully murdered, and in the bed by Lady Constance' side he found the bloody knife. What could poor Constance say? she knew nothing, and was struck dumb with grief and horror.

It happened that Alla, the king of Northumberland, had returned with the Constable, who was his vassal and held the castle for him, and so the whole case was laid before the king. The king sat as judge, and the innocent Constance stood before him, brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and there came the false knight as her accuser, to swear that she had done the deed. But the people all took her part, for they could not believe that one so gentle, kind, and good, was guilty of so foul a murder; and all the servants of the house were ready to bear witness how virtuous she had been, and how she had loved Hermengild as dearly as her life.

Others told the king her story, and how she had been found in the boat cast up by the waves; and as the king heard all, and looked at her death-pale face, he was moved with compassion, and began to mistrust the witness of the knight. Yet it was hard to see who else could have been the murderer, and it was certain that the knife had been found in her bed.

So the king was sore perplexed, and in his perplexity he sent for a book of the Gospels, and bade the false knight swear upon this book that Constance was guilty. The knight prepared to take

the oath; but even as he was raising the book to his lips, an unseen hand smote him from behind, so that he fell down dead as a stone, and a voice was heard, 'False knight, thou didst slander a Christian maid, and yet I held my peace.'

The people marvelled, and so did King Alla, and Constance was pronounced innocent, and all rejoiced. And some days after the king asked Constance to tell him her story, and when he heard from her own lips all the wonderful things that had happened to her, he too, like Elda and Hermengild, was converted, and not long after he married Constance.

It was a merry wedding, if ever there was one, but I have no time to tell you of all the feasting and dancing and singing. All were glad at heart, save one alone, and that was the king's mother, the wicked Donegild. She was so angry with her son for taking a strange woman to wife, that her heart was like to burst with rage and spite.

They had not long been married when King Alla was called away to Scotland to fight against his foes. He was very loth to part, but he knew that he could trust his wife to the care of the good Constable. So Constance stayed behind at the castle, and in due time a son was born to her, and she christened him by the name of Maurice. The Constable at once sent off a messenger to King Alla with the joyful news.

But the messenger, to serve his own ends, in-

stead of taking the letter straight to the king, rode first to the king's mother, and greeted her thus :— 'Madam,' he said, 'praise God and rejoice, for I bring you glad tidings. Our sovereign lady has a child, to the joy of the whole land. I have with me a sealed letter containing the news, which I must bear to the king with all the haste I can. If you have aught to send to your son, I am at your service by day and night.'

Donegild answered, 'I have nothing for you at the moment, but I wish you to rest here for the night, and on the morrow I will tell you what I want.'

The messenger consented, and by the queen-mother's orders ale and wine were set before him, and he drank on and on till he fell into a heavy sleep. While he slept she stole the letter from his wallet, and put a forged letter in its stead, and this was what the forged letter said :—'My liege, your queen has borne you a creature so horrible and fiendish that none dare stay with it in the castle. The mother was a witch, wafted here by chance or wicked charms, and now that she is found out, all men loathe her.'

The king was woe-stricken when he read the letter, yet he told no man of his sorrow, but with his own hand he wrote again to the Constable :— 'I thank God that I am now a Christian, and, whatever happens, can love Him and submit myself to His good will and pleasure. Keep the child, whether

it be foul or fair, and my wife too, till my return. Christ, if it please him, may yet send me an heir more to my liking than this one.'

But O the curse of drunkenness! It makes a man reel and stagger, it mars the face, it clouds the mind, and destroys the wisest counsels, for the drunkard will chatter like a jay and betray all secrets. So it fell out with this drunken messenger; for on his way back he thought of the good cheer, and turned aside again to the court of the king's mother. She was right glad to see him, and plied him with drink as before, so that he again fell asleep and snored till morning. Again his letter was stolen, and a forged letter written to this effect:—'The king orders the Constable, on pain of death, to see that Constance leaves the kingdom within three days and three hours. Put her and her son and all her goods into the same ship that you found her in, and push her off from the land, and charge her never to return.'

The messenger went straight to the castle, and delivered the letter. When the Constable read it, he wrung his hands and cried, 'Alas! how can the world last when it is so full of sin? O God, how canst Thou, who art a righteous judge, suffer innocents to be undone and the wicked to prosper? O good Constance, what a fate is mine! There is no help for it, I must either be your executioner or die a shameful death.'

When the news of the king's letter spread, both

old and young wept, for all loved Constance, but they could do nothing. So on the fourth day, Constance, with a face pale as death, took her way to the ship; yet even then she did not murmur at the will of heaven, but, kneeling on the shore, she said:—'Ever welcome be my lord's commands! He that preserved me from slander when I was here with you on land, can preserve me from harm and wrong on the sea, though I know not how. His strength is ever the same; in Him I trust; He is my sail and my helm.'

Her little child lay weeping on her arm, and piteously she said to him, 'Peace, little son, I will not harm thee.' With that she drew her kerchief from her head, and laid it over his little eyes, and lulled him to sleep in her arms, and looking up to heaven she prayed:—'Mary, bright virgin and mother, thou knowest that by the temptation of woman, mankind was lost and condemned to die. For this thy child was stretched on the cross. Thy blessed eyes saw all his torment; thy woes are greater beyond compare than any woes of ours. Thou didst see thy child slain before thine eyes, while my child is yet alive. Lady bright, to whom all cry in their trouble, fairest of virgins and glory of women, thou haven of refuge and bright star of day, pity my child, gentle maiden, who pityest all the pitiful and needy.

'My poor innocent babe, thou surely hast never done aught that thy hard father should seek thy

death. Have mercy, dear Constable, and let my little child stay with you; or if you dare not save him for fear of punishment, kiss him once for his father's sake.'

With that she looked back at her home, and said, 'Farewell, my ruthless husband;' then she rose and walked down to the shore, followed by the crowd, and now she bade her babe be still, and took her leave of them all, and meekly went into the ship. The cable was cut, and forth she drove on the open sea. Thank God, there were plenty of victuals on board and other provisions for a long journey. God give her fair wind and weather, and send her safe home!

Soon after the king came back to the castle, and asked where his wife and child were. The Constable began to fear that all was not right, and a cold shudder ran through him, but he told the king all, and showed him the letter sealed with the king's own seal, and said, 'My lord, I have done what you bid me on pain of death.' Then they sent for the messenger, and questioned him. At first he would answer nothing, but when they had screwed his thumbs and racked his body, he cried mercy, and confessed where he had stayed by the way. So it was found out who had contrived the foul plot, and written the false letters, and the king sentenced the wicked Donegild to death as a traitress.

Many a day and night did Constance drift over

the waters, and many a fresh peril did she suffer at the hands of the heathen and robbers; but the same God who gave the stripling David strength to overcome the giant Goliath, who lent Judith courage to slay the tyrant Holofernes in his tent, and deliver the children of Israel from their oppressor—that same God turned her weakness into strength, and at length put an end to her misery.

And this was how her deliverance came. Her father, the Emperor of Rome, had heard news of the slaughter of the Christians in Syria, and of the dishonour done to his daughter by the wicked Sultaness, and how she had murdered the Sultan and all his nobles as they sat at table. So the Emperor had sent a captain, and with him a company of mighty warriors, to take vengeance on the Syrians. This they had done, and after conquering and slaying the murderers they were returning in triumph to Rome.

On their voyage they met the ship in which Constance was; for you must know that, after long tossings, the winds and tides had carried her through the narrow straits of Gibraltar, into the Mediterranean. Who she was they knew not, for she would tell nothing of her name or story. The captain brought her with him to Rome, and delivered her and her child into his wife's keeping. His wife, by a strange chance, was Constance' aunt, but after all these years she did not know her niece again. In her house Constance

abode a long time, known to none, but given wholly to good works, as was her wont.

All this while King Alla mourned for his lost wife and son; and as he thought on the past, his conscience smote him for having slain his mother; for, though she well deserved to die, it is a horrible thing for a mother to be slain by the hand of her son. So he determined to go to Rome to do penance, and submit himself to the Pope.

When the news reached Rome that the English king was on his way there as a pilgrim, it was decreed that he should be received with all honour; and it so happened that the officer who was appointed to ride forth and meet him was the captain who had saved Constance. The captain entertained the king right royally, and the king in return invited him to a feast. Some say that the captain took Constance with him to the feast; but, be that as it may, her boy was present, whether at his mother's bidding or not I cannot tell. This much is certain, that he stood during the whole meal facing the king, and the king wondered at him, and asked, 'Who is that lovely boy?' and the captain answered, 'I know not; he has a mother, but no father to my knowledge.' And then he told the king how he and his mother had been found, and what a good and virtuous woman she was.

Now the boy was as like Constance as ever a child is like his mother, and as the king mused on

his face the features of his lost wife came back to him, and he sighed to himself, and left the table quickly. A sudden thought flashed through his mind,—Is it possible that the boy's mother may be my wife? At first it seemed a mere fancy and delusion, for he had long given up his wife as drowned. But then he thought again,—If by a miracle she was carried to England, why should not Heaven have brought her to this place? He hurried off at once to the captain's house, and asked to see the boy's mother.

When Constance knew why she was sent for, she trembled so that she scarce could stand on her feet. But when Alla saw his wife, he clasped her in his arms, and wept sore, for he knew her at the first glance. The poor lady stood rooted to the ground like a tree, for her heart was closed against him when she remembered his cruelty. Twice she swooned away in his arms; but he, weeping bitterly, excused himself, and said, 'I call God to witness that I am as guiltless of injuring you as is Maurice my son, the dear image of yourself. As I hope for mercy, I knew nothing of your cruel banishment.'

Long she sobbed, and could scarce believe it true; but, when he had convinced her of his love and truth, her joy was as great as had been her sorrow. Such joy as this has not been before, and will not be again on earth.

Then Constance prayed her husband that he

would invite her father, the Emperor, to dine with him; but he was never to say a word about her, for she wished to give her father a glad surprise. So the next day, when the Emperor was on his way to the inn at which they lodged, Alla and his wife rode out to meet him, and when she saw her father coming, she lighted from her horse, and fell at his feet, and cried, 'Father, you have clean forgotten your little daughter whom you sent long time ago to Syria. I am your daughter Constance, who was cast adrift on the sea. Dear father, send me no more to heathen lands, but thank my lord here, who saved me and married me.'

I wish I could describe the joy of that greeting, when, father, daughter, and husband, so long parted, met once more. But the day is fleeting, and my tale is already too long. Enough if you know that Constance returned with her husband to England, and that in after years their son Maurice was crowned Emperor by the Pope, and did great honour to the Church of Christ.

THE NUN'S PRIEST.

NUN'S PRIEST'S TALE.

'COME here, Sir Priest,' said the Host; 'tell us something that will make us laugh. It is true the nag you ride is lean and bony, but that matters not a straw, so long as he carries you. Though you ride a sorry beast, that need not hinder your telling a merry tale. A merry heart goes all the day.'

'Yes, Sir Host,' said the Priest; 'whether I ride or trudge on foot, I do my best to be merry.' And so without more ado he told the tale of the Cock and the Fox.

THE COCK AND THE FOX.

THERE was once a poor widow who lived in a humble cottage by a wood-side in a valley. She was an honest old woman, and ever since the day her husband died had worked cheerfully and hard to support herself and her two daughters who lived with her. They had little enough to live upon, for this poor old woman had only three fat pigs, three cows, and a sheep, called Mally, so that it was a wonder how she managed to find food for herself and her daughters when she no longer had a husband to work for her.

There were only two rooms in her cottage, one to sleep in and one to have meals in, and both of them were black with soot, for there was no proper fire-place, and the smoke from the fire came out into the rooms. Many a time they had sat down to breakfast or to dinner and had very little to eat; and even when there was enough it was not very nice, so that the poor widow was never ill from over-eating, or wanted any sauce but hunger. She could not have paid for a doctor, so that, perhaps, it was a good thing that she had very simple food, and had to be on her legs nearly all day long. Simple food and plenty of exercise and a contented mind will generally keep people well, and this widow had all three. If she could not dance, it was not because she had the gout in her feet, as

rich people often have when they eat and drink too much. She never drank wine, either white or red, and lived mostly on milk and brown bread, with sometimes a bit of fried bacon and sometimes an egg or two.

The bacon came from her pigs, and the milk from her cows; and as for the eggs, I forgot to tell you that she had a cock and some hens, and it is the more strange that I should have forgotten to tell you this because all my story is about this very cock.

This cock's name was Chanticleer, and he lived in the old woman's yard, which had a dry ditch all round it and a fence of sticks. No cock in all the land could crow like Chanticleer; his voice was merrier than the merry organ, and he always crowed just at the right time. The church clock itself was not so punctual as he was. How he found out the right time nobody knew, but when the sun was risen a certain height, Chanticleer would crow. He was wise by nature, and knew exactly what o'clock it was in his own village.

A handsome fellow was Chanticleer. His comb was redder than the reddest coral, and indented like the top of a castle wall. His beak was black and shone like jet; his legs and toes were a lovely blue, and his nails as white as a lily. His feathers were like burnished gold.

Chanticleer had seven hens to be his companions and his lady-loves, and they were nearly

as pretty a colour as he was himself, but the fairest of all of them was Dame Partlet. Not only was Dame Partlet lovelier than the other ladies, but she had shown such good breeding ever since she was a week old, and was so polite, so sociable, and had altogether such an air about her, that Chanticleer had quite lost his heart to her, and no wonder. It was a treat to hear him sing in the early morning that sweet song, 'My bonny lass is far away,' for Chanticleer was fond of love songs, and sang them charmingly.

In those old days beasts and birds, you know, *could* speak and sing.

Now it happened that very early one morning Chanticleer sat on his perch among his wives as usual in the widow's kitchen, and his dear Partlet sat sleeping by his side. Presently Chanticleer began to groan in his sleep so dreadfully that Partlet woke up quite in a fright.

She roused him from his dreams and said, 'Dear heart! what ails you? You have been making the most dreadful noise in your sleep. Fie for shame!'

'Madam,' said Chanticleer, 'I beg you not to take it amiss, for I have just had such a frightful dream that I have really hardly yet recovered from my alarm. I only hope no harm will come of it, and that my dream may not come true. I thought I was strolling up and down our yard when I saw a beast like a hound who was going to arrest me and put me to death. He was of a tawny colour,

something between a yellow and a red, and his ears and the tip of his tail were black. He had a small snout, and as for his eyes they shone so fiercely that, upon my word, I was ready to die with fear of his very look. No doubt this was what made me groan in my sleep.'

'Shame on you,' said Dame Partlet, 'shame on you for a coward. I tell you plainly you have quite lost my love. I will never love a milk-sop. Whatever we women may say, we all wish to have husbands who are brave, wise, and generous, and who know how to hold their tongues. We despise a man who is stingy, or stupid, or frightened at the least thing, or fond of bragging of what he can do. How dare you for shame tell your lady-love that you are afraid of anything? You, with a beard and not a man's heart in your body!

'Dear! dear! and frightened at a dream too! Dreams are all nonsense, and come from being not quite well. You eat too much for supper or drink more than is good for you; there is a rush of blood to the head, and then you naturally dream of red things and things that have to do with blood, such as arrows, and red flashes of fire, and red beasts going to bite you, and fights, and dogs, great dogs and little dogs, such as come and bark at us sometimes.

'Or else perhaps people are bilious when they go to bed and then they have black dreams. The dreamer often cries out in his sleep for fear of black

bears that are going to eat him up, or black bulls that are going to toss him with their horns, or else black devils who are going to carry him off altogether.

'I could give you many instances of bodily ailments which cause bad dreams, but I do not care to dwell on this subject. Cato, who is said to have been a very wise man, told us to take no account of dreams, as you, I dare say, may remember, my love. So you had better take a little medicine to clear away the fever and biliousness which are hanging about you. Upon my life and soul, my dear, I am giving you the very best advice. You must take some medicine at once, and as there is no doctor living in this town, I will myself prescribe two herbs which grow in this yard and which will do you a great deal of good.

'Now I know you're not attending, but if you are in this state of heat when the sun shines hot in the middle of the day, I'll lay a penny you will have a fever or an ague. You shall have a diet of worms for a day or two, which will be sure to agree with you, and then I will give you laurel, centaury, and fumitory, or else some elderberries, spurge and dogwood leaves, and a little ground ivy. You must pick them up fresh as they grow, and swallow them down. Remember you are of good family, my love, and pray not a word more of being afraid of a dream.'

'Madam,' said Chanticleer, 'I am quite overpowered by your learning. I hope I shall not have

occasion to trouble you for any medicine just at present; and as to Master Cato, whom you mentioned just now, he may be a very wise man, but if he says that dreams are all nonsense, I beg leave to tell you that there are many men of much greater authority than ever Cato was, who say just the contrary, as men may read in old books. They say that dreams often foretell both good and bad things that are going to happen. It is absurd to argue about it, because this has been proved to be true by experience, and is an established fact. For instance, in one of the greatest writers that ever lived I read this story.

'There were two friends who went on a journey together for some good purpose or other; and it happened that, as they were travelling, they came late one evening to a certain town, where they intended to spend the night.

'The town was so full of strangers that they went from house to house without finding anyone who would take them both in, for there was not even a single cottage where there were two beds to spare. So the friends were forced to part company and manage as well as they could each for himself. One could find no better lodging than an ox's stall in an out of the way yard, but his friend was more lucky and was lodged well enough.

'Now, the second of the two friends was lying in his comfortable bed, when, in the middle of the night, he dreamt that he heard his friend

calling to him and saying, "Come and help me, dear brother, or I shall be murdered this night in an ox's stall where I am lying. Help! help!"

The dreamer awoke out of his sleep in horror, but when he found that it was only a dream, he turned on his other side and went to sleep again. The horrible dream came again and woke him, but he took no notice of it and went to sleep again. Then he thought he saw his friend come to him a third time and say, "It is too late, and I have been murdered. See my bloody wounds. Get up early to-morrow and at the west gate of the town you will see a cart full of dung. In that dung-cart my body will be hidden. Stop the cart boldly. I was murdered for my money." And the dreamer thought his friend stood by his bedside with a pale and piteous face, and told him exactly how he had been killed.

'The next morning, as soon as it was light, the man who had these dreams got up and went to find his friend, and when he reached the yard he began to call him. Presently an ostler came up and said, "Your friend is gone, sir; he went out of town at daybreak."

'When he heard this the man remembered his dreams and felt a dreadful suspicion. He went straight to the west gate of the town, and there he found a cart full of dung ready to go out into the fields, exactly like the cart described by his dead friend in the dream.

'He doubted no longer, but raised the hue and cry, and shouted "Murder! help! my friend has been killed this very night, and his corpse lies gaping in this cart. Where are the magistrates? Alas! my friend is murdered."

'The people ran together and hastily upset the cart, and there in the middle of the dung they found the body of a man who had been lately killed. So true it is that "murder will out." The carter and the ostler were caught and put to the torture till they confessed their deed, and were hanged by the neck for it.

'This story shows that sometimes dreams come true,' said Chanticleer; 'and in the same book where this tale is told, in the very next chapter (I give you my word for it), there is the story of two men who meant to sail to a far country. But the wind was contrary, so that they were forced to wait in a town by the seaside until the wind should change. At last one evening the wind changed to the quarter that they wished, and they went joyfully to bed, meaning to set sail very early the next morning. In the middle of the night one of them dreamt that a man stood by his bedside and said, "*If you sail to-morrow you will be drowned.*"

'The dreamer woke, and told his dream to his friend, and begged him to wait in that town still one day more. But the other laughed at him, and said, "Do you think I would let a dream interfere with my business. I don't care a straw about your dreams.

Dreams are all lies; men are always dreaming of owls and apes and all sorts of ridiculous things which never come true. But as I see you have made up your mind to stay and fool away a good chance, I can only say that I am sorry for you, and so good-by."

'He took his leave and went his way, but before he had sailed half his voyage, by some unaccountable accident, his ship, with all her crew, suddenly went down in full sight of the other ships who had sailed with her.

'And, therefore, my dear Partlet, you may learn from these old examples, that no one should despise dreams, for many a dream is a serious warning.

'I have read in the life of St. Kenelm, how he foresaw his murder in a vision when he was only seven years old, and how his nurse explained his vision to him, and told him to keep out of harm's way; but he was too young and innocent to heed the warning, and found, too late, that dreams come true.

'I would give my spurs for you to have read the legend of St. Kenelm as I have. I may tell you too, Dame Partlet, that Macrobius, who wrote the account of the vision of worthy Scipio in Africa, believes in dreams, and says they are warnings.

'Again, perhaps you will examine the Old Testament and see if Daniel thought dreams were nonsense, and read of Joseph, and then say whether

dreams do not come true (of course, I do not say *always*). Again the baker and butler of King Pharaoh—you will allow that they had some reason to believe in dreams.

'If you will read general history you will find many wonderful dreams that came true, — the dream of Crœsus, for instance, who dreamt that he was to be hanged, and the dream of Andromache, the wife of Hector, who dreamt of his death the night before it happened. She warned him, but all in vain, and he was slain by Achilles.

'However, that story is much too long to tell, and it is nearly daybreak, so that I have no more time. The long and the short of the matter is, that I say that harm will come of this dream of mine, and, further, that I set no store by your medicines —nasty poisonous things, as I well know. I don't believe in them. I don't like them at all. Now let us leave all this and speak of pleasanter things. In one thing, Madam Partlet, I am indeed fortunate, in being blessed with so lovely a wife, for when I gaze on the beauty of your face and see the scarlet round your eyes, I forget instantly all my troubles, and my fears die away. *In principio mulier hominis est confusio.* That is Latin, madam, and means, "Woman is the comfort and joy of mankind."' [Now this was naughty of Chanticleer, because the Latin really means "Woman is the chief trouble of man."]

So saying, Chanticleer flew down from the

beam, for it had grown light while he was talking, and all his hens flew down too.

He went into the yard and soon began to cry chuck, chuck, to call his wives, for he had found a corn in the yard. Chanticleer was royal now, and no longer in the least afraid. He looked about him as grim and majestic as a lion, and marched up and down on his toes, without condescending to put his foot to the ground. Whenever he found a grain he said chuck, chuck, and all his wives ran to him as fast as they could go. It was the third day of May, and Chanticleer was in all his pride, like any royal prince, with his seven wives walking by his side. He cast a glance at the bright sun, and knew by his natural wisdom that it was six o'clock in the morning; so he crew merrily, and said, 'I see by the sun's place in the sky that it is just past six o'clock. Ah, Madam Partlet, the joy of the world to me, hark how the happy birds are singing, and see the fresh flowers how they are springing all round us. I declare I am the happiest man alive.'

You know the old rhyme—

> 'After joy comes sorrow.
> Laugh to-day and cry to-morrow;'

and if this tale were told properly in a book a writer might make a fine moral out of it.

A wicked deceitful fox, a sly old sinner, who had been prowling about the neighbouring wood

for the last three years, had that very night burst through the hedge into the yard where Chanticleer and his wives were accustomed to take their exercise, and lay hidden in a bed of nettles until the evening, waiting for a good time to fall on Chanticleer. That is the mean way with these wicked cut-throats, always to lie in wait to murder men.

Oh, villain of a fox! you are another Judas, and as great a deceiver as the Greek man Sinon, who caused the fall of Troy. Poor Chanticleer! it was an unlucky day for you when you flew down from your perch on the beam to walk in the yard, when you had been so well warned beforehand in your dream. It was by his wife's advice that Chanticleer despised his dream, and walked as usual in the yard. Women's advice is often a poor bit of wisdom. A woman's advice led us all into sin, and turned Adam out of Eden where he was so happy.

However, I must not say anything against women, for some folks may not like it. There are plenty of books about it, and we are only thinking now about what Chanticleer said afterwards. Women are quite divine, I think, and I will not say a word against them.

Dame Partlet and the other ladies were dusting themselves in the sand, and enjoying the warm sunshine, and Chanticleer was by himself, and sang as sweetly as a mermaid in the sea; and as he happened to glance at a butterfly that had settled on the nettles, he was aware of the fox crouching down among them.

Chanticleer had no mind at all to crow just at that minute. He said 'Cok, cok,' and started like a man heartily frightened; for any animal knows his natural enemy, although he may never have seen him before.

Chanticleer was making off as fast as he could, but the fox at once addressed him in a most gentlemanlike manner, and said, 'Alas, my dear sir, why are you going? Can it be that *I* alarm you, who am your warmest friend. Indeed, I should be worse than a fiend if I meant to do you any injury or wrong. I assure you I have not come here with any wish to intrude, or act as a spy; but, as you have caught me, I see I must be open with you, and confess that I came to hear you sing. I must say that I think your voice is like an angel's; and it is not only the voice, but you sing with such *feeling* and *expression*.

'Ah, my dear sir, I knew your father well—rest his soul—and your mother too, bless her gentle heart. They have often done me the great pleasure and honour to visit me at my own house, and I am sure I should esteem your friendship and good opinion most highly.

'But talking of singing, your father had a wonderful voice. Except yourself I never in my life heard any man who could come near him, especially in his morning songs. Ah, his songs came from the heart indeed! And to bring out the full power of his voice, he would exert himself so nobly,

that he was forced to wink both his eyes, and he would stand on tip toes and stretch out his neck so long and small—and then he was a man of such sound sense, so discreet. There was no one in this neighbourhood who was at all his equal either in music or wisdom.

'I remember a fine poem of Master Brown's, the respected ass, which recounts how a cock in the flower of his youth received a knock on the leg from a priest's son, and how the cock succeeded in making the priest lose his living in consequence; but this cock was not nearly such a clever man as your father. And now I beg you, my dear sir, do let me hear you sing, that I may see whether you have inherited your father's marvellous voice.'

Chanticleer was so ravished with this flattery that he had no suspicion of the fox's treachery, and began to beat his wings.

He stood high on his toes and stretched out his neck and shut his eyes tight, and began to crow loudly enough—and Mr. Renard, the fox, took the opportunity to catch him by the throat, throw him over his back, and carry him off towards the wood close by; for as yet not a soul had seen him.

Poor Chanticleer! He had better have stayed on his perch. This was what came of his wife laughing at dreams. And all this happened on a Friday too, of all days in the week,—an unlucky day, Friday. Poor King Richard died on a Friday, as you all know.

When his wives caught sight of Chanticleer in this dreadful plight they screamed louder than all the Trojan ladies at the death of Priam, and Dame Partlet especially shrieked louder than the rest. Poor hens! they cried as dismally as the Senators' wives when the Emperor Nero burnt the city of Rome and slew their innocent husbands.

The widow and her two daughters were in the house, and heard the hens crying and making a great lamentation, and ran to the door to see what was the matter, and there they saw the fox making off to the wood with the cock upon his back.

They all cried out, 'Mercy on us! Hi! the fox! the fox!' and off they went after him, and many a neighbour too with sticks and brooms. Out ran Collie the dog, Talbot ran, Garland ran, Goody Malkyn ran with her distaff in her hand, the cow and the calf ran, the pigs themselves were so frightened by the barking of the dogs and the shouts of the men and women, that they ran and ran until they thought their hearts would break, and yelled like the fiends down in hell. The ducks quacked as if their last day was come. The geese flew over the trees in a panic, and out came the swarm of bees from the hives in a rage at the din. Jack Straw and his ruffians never made such a din as was made that day after the fox. They shouted and hooted and blew horns fit to bring the sky down.

But often enough hope and pride have a fall,

and that Master Renard soon discovered. Chanticleer, who lay upon the fox's back in the utmost terror, had yet not quite lost his presence of mind, and now said to the fox, 'Sir, if I were in your place, I should just say to this screaming rabble, "Back with you, insolent yokels, and a plague on you. Now I am come to this woodside I defy the whole herd of you. I will not carry the cock a yard further, but eat him up at once.'" 'And I will,' said the fox,—but no sooner did he open his mouth to reply than Chanticleer nimbly broke away and flew straight up into a tree to a good safe height.

When the fox saw he was gone, he said, 'Poor dear Chanticleer, I beg your pardon, I did very wrong to frighten you by taking hold of you and bringing you out of the yard, but indeed, sir, I meant no harm. Come down and I will explain my motive. I solemnly declare I will tell you the truth.' 'No, no, no!' said Chanticleer. 'Take me head and tail if you beguile me more than once. You won't flatter me a second time into singing and winking my eyes. If a man wilfully shuts his eyes when he ought to keep them open, it serves him right if he comes to a bad end.'

'I know a better bit of wisdom than that,' answered the fox. "Ill befall the man who is such a fool as to chatter when he ought to hold his tongue;" and if I had thought of that sooner I should not have lost my dinner.'

THE SQUIRE.

THE SQUIRE'S TALE.

THE Host laughed heartily at the Priest's tale, and turning to the Squire, he said, 'After this merry tale, it is the turn for a love story, and you, Squire, methinks, must know as much of love as any man here.' 'Well,' said the Squire, 'your will is law. I will do my best; and ask the company to be indulgent to my youth.'

CANACE AND HER MAGIC GIFTS.

AT Sarai in the land of Tartary there lived long time ago a mighty king called Cambuscan. He was a great warrior, and had made war against Russia, and in daring deeds he was as venturous as the youngest of his knights. He was, moreover, true and just, courteous and hospitable. This famous king was married to a wife whose name was Elpheta, and they had two sons, the elder called Algarsif, and the younger Cambalo. They had also a daughter Canace, their youngest born. She was so beautiful that it would require a cleverer man than I to describe her. I must leave you to picture to yourselves her exceeding loveliness.

Now it happened that when King Cambuscan had been twenty years on his throne, he invited all his friends, and all the nobles of the city, to a great feast, as was his custom every year, to keep his birthday, which fell on the fifteenth day of March. The weather was warm and the sun shone clear and strong, and the birds flitted from bough to bough in the bright sunshine, and trilled forth their loves, rejoicing that winter was past and spring was green again.

So on his birthday the king, in his royal robes and crown, sat in the banqueting hall of his palace. 'Twould take a long summer's day to tell you all

the rich dishes that were served at the feast. They had all sorts of game, flesh and fowl, and swans and herons; for in Tartary many dishes are reckoned delicacies which we should not care to eat in England.

But I must get on with my story, for I have now come to the most wonderful part of it. Just after the third course, while the king was sitting at table with all his nobles, and hearing the minstrels making sweet music before him, all of a sudden there rode in at the hall door a knight seated on a horse of brass, with a great mirror in his hand, and on his thumb a ring of gold, and so he rode up the hall with his naked sword. All were dumb with amazement, and stared at the strange knight as he rode past them clad in steel from top to toe, save that his head was bare.

The knight bowed gravely to the lords and ladies ranged on either side, and when he reached the high table where the king was sitting he bowed to his saddle bow, and spoke as follows: 'My liege lord, the King of Araby and India salutes you on your birthday, and as a token of his friendship he sends by me, your humble servant, these presents. First this steed of brass, which in the space of four-and-twenty hours will bear you where you choose, or soar with you through the air like an eagle as high as you will. Its paces are so gentle that you may sleep on its back. It is the work of a great magician.

'Secondly this mirror which you see in my hand. It will show you any coming misfortune, and discoverwho is your friend or foe. If any lady look into it she shall see clearly whether her lover be false or true.

'Therefore he has sent this to your daughter Canace, and with it he has sent her a ring. If she wear it on her thumb, or carry it in her purse, she shall be able to understand the language of every bird under heaven, and to answer it again in its native tongue. She shall know what the trees whisper to one another in the greenwood, and the virtues of every herb of the field.

'This naked sword that I bear by my side is so keen that if a man is smitten with it, it will bite through his armour though it be as thick as a gnarled oak; and whoever is wounded with it will never be whole again of his hurt till you are pleased to stroke the place with its flat side, and then the wound will close. This is the sober truth that I tell you. This sword will never fail either to kill or cure.'

When the knight had told his message, he rode out of the hall and dismounted. His steed, which shone like the sun, stood in the court-yard as still as a stone. They led the knight to his chamber, helped him to unarm, and set him down to meat. His presents, the sword and the mirror, were borne in state to the high tower of the palace, and certain officers were appointed to guard them.

The ring too was solemnly presented to Canace as she sat at table.

But as for the horse of brass, no pulleys nor windlass could have made that stir, but it stood where the knight left it, as though it were glued to the ground, for none could move it save the knight, or he to whom the knight told the secret. So all the people flocked around to stare at it. It was as broad and strong as a dray horse, and yet as well bred and quick of eye as a racer. The crowd grew more and more, and all admired it, but each one held his own opinion, and the hum of many voices sounded like the murmur of a swarm of bees. 'What a splendid horse,' said one; 'perfect from ear to tail.' 'Yes,' said another; 'but 'tis a horse of brass, how can it possibly go?' A third, who was a poet, compared it to Pegasus, that famous Greek horse which had wings and flew. 'Nay,' quoth his neighbour, 'it seems to me more like that other Greek horse whereof I have read in Virgil, which brought destruction to Troy.' 'I am quite of your opinion,' said an old gentleman, standing by, 'it does look remarkably like that wooden horse. I verily believe it's full of armed men come to take our city. It alarms me greatly, and the matter ought really to be looked into.' 'Just listen to the old fool's prating,' whispered a clever youth to his neighbour, 'it's not a horse at all; it's only a trick such as you may see conjurors perform any day.'

Thus they babbled and wrangled and guessed, and, as is generally the case with ignorant people, because they didn't understand the thing, they thought there must be something queer about it.

And about the other presents they argued as foolishly as about the horse. The magical mirror, they said, was such as any clever optician could make. One said that he had read all about it in a learned book, and another declared he had seen just such a one in Rome. A scholar reminded them of the sword of Achilles which had this same power of wounding or healing, and a wag quoted the vulgar proverb about taking a hair of the dog that bit you. In the same way they discussed Canace's ring. Some said that Moses, who was learned in all the magic of the Egyptians, had made one like it, and some recalled the mystic signet ring of Solomon, the wisest of men.

And so it always is. People wonder and marvel at anything till they know the cause of it, and then they think it the simplest thing in the world. Once it seemed almost a miracle to make glass by burning fern leaves in the sand, but now that we know what glass is made of, it seems as easy and natural to make glass as to make bricks.

But while the crowd were thus busily engaged outside, the feast in the hall had ended, and the king rose and left the high table. Before him went the minstrels, playing so sweetly that it was a heaven to hear, and so he came to the presence

chamber. And then the dance began, and the king bade the strange knight lead off the dance with the Lady Canace. Then began the fun and jollity. They bowed, they set, they wound in and out, they turned and whirled, and the knights' eyes flashed, and the ladies cast sidelong glances, and all was love and merriment. And then the steward came to bid them to supper, and the ushers marshalled them to their places, and they ate and drank of the best.

And when supper was over they went to the temple of the gods to say their prayers, and after the service the king, with all the court of lords and ladies, went out to see the horse of brass, and the grand dames and lords wondered at it almost as much as the common crowd. At last the king asked the knight to tell him all about the marvellous horse, and explain to him how it moved. Thereupon the knight walked up to the horse and laid his hand on the rein, and at once the horse began to prance and paw the ground. 'Sire,' said the knight, 'your question is easily answered. If you wish to ride anywhere you have only to mount the horse and whisper to him the place where you would be, and then turn a pin in his ear—which I will show you in private—and he will carry you there as quick as thought. And when you wish to descend, turn another pin—which I will likewise show you—and bid him stop. In an instant he will stop, and no power on earth

will move him from the place. There is also a third pin, which will make him vanish out of sight or appear again in a moment. Thus may you ride by day or night, over land or sea, when and where you will.'

So the lords and ladies returned to the banquet, but the king stayed behind, and he learnt from the knight the secret of the pins, and then he joined the revel, rejoicing at the royal presents, and they feasted late into the night. The bridle was borne to the tower and laid up with the royal jewels, but the horse vanished, I know not whither.

The revels all were ended. Sleep, nature's soft nurse, whispered in each ear 'Rest, weary reveller, enough of feast and play,' and kissed them with a gaping mouth. Gaping they thanked the drowsy god, and by twos and threes crept to bed. Heavy was their slumber, and when they woke the sun was high in heaven. Not so Canace; she would not lose her beauty sleep, but, like a wise maid, had bade her father good night while the evening was still young, and she woke at dawn, from her first sleep, as fresh as a wood-lark. All night she had been dreaming of her new presents, and her first thoughts on waking were of her ring and mirror. So excited and eager was she to try them, that twenty times her face flushed with pleasure.

Before the sun was up she called her governess, who slept with her, and told her that she wished

to get up. The old governess did not like to be thus disturbed in her sleep, and answered her: 'Madam, where would you go thus early, when all the world is abed?' 'I must get up,' said the princess, 'and walk abroad. I cannot sleep any longer.' So the governess called her women—some ten or twelve of them. Up they rose, and up rose Canace herself, as bright and ruddy as was the young May sun that morning just peering over the forest. It did not take her long to put on her dress of grass-green silk (for that's the colour to go a-maying in), and soon she was walking in the park all alone, save for five or six of her maidens who attended her.

As she wandered down the green alleys the morning mist was steaming from the earth, and the sun showed through it broad and red. The sweet season, the bright morning, the fresh air, and the fair scene, all made her heart laugh within her.

The birds too sang for joy, and, as she listened to their song, she knew at once, by the help of her ring, what every note meant as plainly as if they had been talking to her. Each bird had a different tale; but my story has to do with one alone.

As Canace was roaming through the wood she came to a withered tree, with stem as white as chalk, and on the tree top, high above her head, there sat a noble bird, a great peregrine falcon; and, as Canace *came near*, the falcon uttered such a loud and

piteous shriek that all the wood resounded, and ever as she shrieked and cried she beat herself with her wings, and tore her breast with her beak, till her blood trickled down the tree, and the poor bird almost fainted for want of blood, and seemed ready to fall from the tree.

Truly it was a piteous sight, and would have melted a heart of stone. Think, then, how it moved Canace, who not only heard the cry, but, thanks to her ring, understood what it meant. She hurried to the tree and gazed with tearful eyes on the falcon, and held her lap to catch her when she should fall. So she stood watching her for a long while, till at last she cried to her: 'O tell me the reason of your anguish; I think that either some dear one must have died, or else you must have lost your love, for these are the two chief causes which make gentle hearts weep. Indeed, I am sure it must be either love or grief that makes you wound and hurt yourself thus cruelly, for I can see no one chasing or annoying you. O pray show some mercy to yourself. I never saw beast or bird so cruel to himself. Your wretchedness makes my heart break; I feel so sorry for you. For pity's sake, I entreat you to come down from the tree, and I swear to you, as I am a king's daughter, that I will do all I can to comfort you and heal you of your wounds.'

The falcon at these words uttered a more piteous shriek than ever, and fell to the ground, and lay in a faint, dead as a stone. Canace took her up

tenderly, and laid her in her lap, and after awhile she began to open her eyes and recover from her faint, and looking up at Canace, she said to her in hawks' language: 'Fair lady, I have often read that gentlest hearts are quickest touched to pity, for their own woe teaches them to melt at the woe of others; and now your pity for me, and your tenderness, show me that what I read is true. Therefore, dear lady, I will tell you all my story, not that I hope for any ease or cure, but, as some return for your kindness, I would obey your will; and it may be that others, when they hear my fate, will take warning by me.'

At these words the gentle lady wept, but the falcon bade her stop her tears and listen, and then she began her sad story.

'I was born and bred in a rock of grey marble, and brought up so tenderly that till the time came when I could fly, I had never known what sorrow was. In another rock hard by my home there lived a goshawk. He seemed a gentle bird, and I liked him well, for he was pleasant and courteous, and ever ready to serve me and do me pleasure. Often would he tell me of his love, and when I refused to hear, he pined and moped and looked so wretched that I thought he would die. At last I took pity on his misery, and having proved him by long trial, I gave him my heart as he (for so he swore) had long given me his. Fool that I was to believe his oaths! Little did I know that lovers'

oaths are straw, that so fair a form could hide so black a heart.

'When I confessed my love, his eyes beamed with joy and thankfulness, and he spoke such tender and thrilling words that it was bliss for any woman to hear them, and the chariest maid must have believed them. I, at least, never doubted him, but henceforth I was his body and soul. His will was my will, and his word my law. I rejoiced with his joy, and his slightest grief grieved me to the heart. I never loved aught so dearly as him, and God knows I never shall again. This happy state lasted for more than a year, and all this time I thought nothing but good of him.

'But one day he told me that he was obliged to leave me for a time, and travel into foreign parts on a matter which touched his honour nearly. No words could describe my grief at this news. You must picture it to yourself. I can truly say that I seemed then to know what the pain of death is like. When the day for departure came, he seemed almost as sad as I, and I verily believed he felt as much pain as I. With tears in his eyes he told me that he must needs go, but would return in a little space, and I tried to put a brave face on it, and said to him, "Fare you well, go since go you must, and remember that I am all yours, as I have been, and ever more shall be." What need to tell you his answer? None could speak better than he—none do worse.

'Alas! it's just the same with birds and men —they are never long content, but always wanting something new. Look at a caged bird; you may feed it with bread, and milk, and sugar, and honey, and strew its cage with the softest litter, but only open the door, and away flies the bird, spurning cup and dish, and preferring worms and grubs to all your dainties. So fared it with this goshawk. Though he was a noble bird, well-bred and well-reared, yet he chanced to meet on his travels a common vulgar kite, and suddenly he fell in love with this kite, and all his love for me was gone, his plighted troth, his faith and honour, all broken. Thus this kite keeps my love in her service, and I am forlorn and without remedy.'

Tears choked her voice, and she swooned on Canace's bosom. Great was the sorrow of Canace and her women, and they knew not how to comfort the falcon. But Canace carried the bird home in her lap, and put plaster on the places where she had torn herself, and made salves of healing herbs, which she found in the woods by means of her ring. And she made a big cage for the sick bird by her bedside, and the inside was covered with true-blue velvet, as a sign of woman's truth, and on the outside were painted all the false birds like this goshawk,—the sparrow hawks, the owls, and the cuckoos, and beside them were chattering magpies to mock at them, and they were all painted green, for that colour is the sign of fickleness.

Here I must leave Canace nursing her bird, and forbear to tell you more of her ring. This much I will add. The falcon grew well of her wounds under Canace's care, but she pined for loss of her love. So Canace looked into her mirror, and found out where the goshawk was, and she sent her brother Camballo to tell the goshawk of his faithful falcon, and the goshawk repented and was forgiven.

. . . . . .

[You will want to hear all about the wonderful horse of brass and the brave deeds of Cambuscan, and how Algarsyf wooed and wedded the fair Theodora. Alas, the tale is left half told; who shall end what Chaucer began?]

THE FRANKLIN.

THE FRANKLIN'S TALE.

'By my faith,' said the Franklin, 'you have told us an excellent tale, considering your youth. You speak with such feeling that, if only you live long enough, I wager there is no one here that will match you in eloquence. So I wish you God speed, for I liked much the way you told your story. I have a son just about your age, and I declare I'd gladly give away this very minute a hundred pounds' worth of land, if he were as wise and steady a young man as you. What's the good of land and money

to a man, if he is not wise and honest too? I have rated my son often enough, and shall again, for he is a dissipated fellow, and cares for nothing but playing at dice and flinging away all his money. He would rather crack jokes with any idle knave than have some sensible talk with a well-bred man.'

'A fig for your good breeding,' said our Host; 'you forget, Franklin, that each of you must tell a story or break your promise.' 'I know that very well,' said the Franklin, 'but pray don't be impatient at my saying a word or two to this man.' 'Go on with your tale, man, without more ado,' cried the Host. 'Well, Sir Host,' said he, 'I will gladly do your bidding to the best of my power: now listen to my story, and, if it only please you, I shall be well satisfied.

'In old times the Bretons had many a ballad of stirring adventures which they would either sing to sweet music or read aloud for their own enjoyment. One of these I remember, and I will repeat it to you as well as I can. But first I must beg you, since I am a plain man, to excuse my rough speech; I was never taught fine language, and what I say may sound harsh and abrupt. I'm no poet, and I never learnt my Cicero. But if you will put up with a simple straightforward story, here's for you.'

DORIGEN.

THERE once lived in Brittany a knight named Arviragus, who was in love with a gentle lady named Dorigen. She was not only the most beautiful woman under the sun, but she was of such noble birth, that Arviragus was afraid to tell

her that he loved her. The only way that he could show his love was by doing brave deeds in her honour and by risking his life to perform her lightest wish, and thus he became famous for the noble and daring adventures that his love had urged him to. Arviragus served Dorigen as if she was his queen, but still she knew he was her lover (for a woman can often tell that a man loves her although he may never say so), and when she saw how good and meek he was and how unhappy, she grew to pity him.

Pity and love in a lady's heart are much alike, and so it was not strange that this beautiful and high-born Dorigen soon loved the poor knight tenderly, and wished to have him for her husband as much as he did to have her for his wife.

So they were married; and they began their wedded life by making a promise to each other which was as excellent as it was strange. Arviragus promised never by day or night to make her do anything she did not wish. He said she might be kind to anyone and he would never be jealous, and that he would obey her always as he had when he was her lover; only when other people were by he must seem to be her lord and master, or else they would cry shame on him, for it is thought that a noble knight should have an obedient modest wife.

Dorigen was grateful, and gently and humbly said, 'Since you are ready to take me for your

queen, dear Arviragus, I will show you that I know how to prize the service of such a generous heart as yours. I pray God that we may never quarrel by any fault of mine, and I promise to be your own true and humble wife. Dorigen shall love and obey you to the day of her death.'

Think sometimes of this loving compact between Dorigen and her knight; for I can tell you one thing, and that is that those who love each other must obey each other if they are to be friends together long. Love will not bear that one should lord it over the other. If the god of love meets with a high and haughty heart, he soon flaps his little wings, and—good-bye, Love! No! no! as our friend the poet sings,

> Love is a thing as any spirit free.

Women, like all other creatures, wish for liberty, and not to be treated like slaves, and so do men. If you will look you will find that the patient lover always conquers in the end. Let us learn of ourselves to be patient, or else we shall be taught the lesson whether we will or no. We must either have patience or else go live alone, for there is not a man living who does not sometimes do or say something harsh. Either he is ill or vexed or out of sorts. We must learn to give and take, for if we were bent on paying out every wrong, we could not live together for an hour.

To return to my story, Arviragus and Dorigen

had learnt this lesson well. Their only strife was which should obey the wishes of the other. He took her home to his castle on the coast of Brittany, and there for a year and more they lived in perfect peace and happiness.

But these delightful days could not last for ever. All his life long Arviragus had been a fighter, and now he began to reproach himself for his happy idleness, and he determined to cross the sea to Britain and win fresh honours in the wars.

Dorigen was very sad at parting from her lord whom she loved as her life, and though she knew that it was right for him to go, when he had sailed away she fell ill for sorrow, and never passed a day or night without tears. She spent her time in sighs and moans, slept little, and hardly touched food; and longed so for her husband back again that she did not care a bit for all the world beside. Her friends, who knew her sorrow and its cause, did all they could to comfort her. They talked to her night and day, telling her she was wicked to destroy her health and perhaps her life by her obstinate and useless grieving.

For a long time Dorigen would not listen to them, but at last she began to yield a little, just as even granite is carved in time by the stone mason's chisel. Her friends did not cease to remind her how foolish it was to hurt herself by giving way to her sorrow, and how it would grieve her husband if he knew it; and she was at last brought to look for-

ward to the day of his return. Indeed, such wild despair as hers could not last, and for all the comforting of her friends she would have very likely died, had it not been that Arviragus never failed to send her news of his welfare whenever he could, and wrote in his letters that he should be sure to come home as soon as possible.

When her friends saw that Dorigen began to regain her cheerful looks, they prayed her on their very knees to come out with them to walk, and to join in their other pleasures out of doors. 'It was the best way,' they said, 'to drive dark fancies from her mind.' Dorigen saw that what they said was wise, but it was some time before she could bring herself to do as they wished.

The Castle of Arviragus and Dorigen stood close by the sea; and when the lady had been at last persuaded to go out of doors, her friends used often to take her for a walk along the cliffs above the shore, where she could breathe the fresh sea air and watch the ships and boats go sailing by to the harbour where they would be. It was a pleasant sight, but it brought none but sad thoughts to Dorigen. Many a time she said to herself, 'Is there no ship, among the many I see sail by, which will bring me home my lord? Ah! then, then my poor sore heart would soon be well again.' Another time she would come to the edge of the cliff, and cast her eyes down upon the beach below, and when she saw it bristling with horrible black

rocks, she would be so overcome by fears that she could not stand, but would sink down on the green turf, and gaze piteously into the sea, and call upon God with a fainting heart.

'Eternal God,' she said, 'men say that Thou hast made all perfect from the first, and rested from Thy work, creating nothing new, and all things are ordained by Thee. But why? oh why hast Thou made these grim black rocks? All the rest of Thy works are fair and good for man and beast, but I might go north, and south, and east, and west, and never find a man, nor a bird, nor a beast, to which these rocks are of any use. Thou dost so love mankind that Thou madest man in Thine own image, and yet how many thousands of men have perished by shipwreck on the rocks! Learned men say all is for the best. They may be right; but I cannot understand the reason of these things. I only know that stormy winds may keep my lord from me; and as for these black rocks, I wish they were sunk as deep as hell, for they make me die almost for fear.'

Such were the wild words which Dorigen would sob forth, and her friends soon found she had no pleasure in wandering by the sea, but that it only made her think of her husband's absence and his danger. So they led her to the loveliest spots they knew by the brinks of rivers and clear wells, and there they would dance and play at chess and draughts, and spend delicious days.

Among other places where they used to go was a garden close at hand, and there one morning Dorigen went with her companions. They took dainties with them, and all that heart could desire for sport and merriment, for they meant to take their pleasure all day long. It was the sixth of May, and May with his soft showers had clothed the trees and bushes with green leaves, and sprinkled the ground with crowfoot, and daffodil, and violets, and the budding blue-bell, and gardeners had made smooth paths and trim lawns, so that it was like the garden of Eden. The sweet scent of flowers and the fresh green would have made any heart grow light, that was not sick to death. Such a one was Dorigen, and this was why, when after dinner the others began to dance and sing, she wandered in the garden with slow steps, singing to herself sad songs of old times. They might dance and be merry, but how could she not be sad when she could not see her husband and true love in the ring? Still, for the sake of others she tried to lay aside her grief, and, returning to her companions, looked on quietly while they danced.

Now among the dancers was a young squire named Aurelius, as gay and bright as May itself. He sang and danced better than any man. He was young and lusty, rich and wise, and a favourite with everybody. Dorigen stood and watched him

dancing. He was an old friend of hers, and she used to meet him now and again at merrymakings. He was her neighbour too, and so she was not displeased when he came to speak to her after the dance.

Dorigen little knew Aurelius' heart. For two whole years he had loved her better than any living thing. He dared not tell her so, but sometimes he would sing sad songs of love, so that she might have found out his secret if she had had a thought for any one except her own Arviragus. Poor Aurelius would make sweet ditties, saying how he loved, but his love had no return; and how, like poor Echo in the old story, he must die and never tell his love. He would look sometimes in Dorigen's eyes as if he asked compassion, but she never noticed his mute appeals.

While Dorigen was in the first outburst of her sorrow for her husband's absence, Aurelius had lost all sight of her, and this May day, when he again spoke with his dear mistress, his passion, the stronger for her long absence, made him declare his love. At first they chatted together as any friends might, but he grew ever more tender in his talk, till he saw his time, and then he said, 'I would to God, lady, that, when your Arviragus went upon the sea, I too had sailed the self same day, and never come back again to see your face. I know too well that though I give to you my whole heart's service, a broken heart will be my sole reward. But pity the

sorrow you have caused, dear lady:—with a word you can slay me or save me. I would I were lying dead at your feet:—take pity on me, or I must die indeed.'

Dorigen now looked on Aurelius with opened eyes. 'What is this I hear?' she said, in surprise. 'I have seen you look on me before, but never knew, Aurelius, what you meant. I know your meaning now, and as sure as the good God sits above who gave me soul and life, I declare I will never be an untrue wife in word or deed. Do I not belong to my lord and husband? never to my knowledge will I love another man.' And then she dismissed him with a bitter jest:—'Take my final answer. Since you complain so piteously and say you are dying of your love for me, I will faithfully promise to be your own true love on one condition, and one only. I call God as witness to my vow. When you have cleared this coast of Brittany of all the rocks, stone by stone, that lie along the shore, so that no ship or boat shall be hindered from sailing where they will—when, I say, you have so cleared the sea shore that not a stone is to be seen, then I will love you better than any other man, and not till then.'

'Can you give me no better hope than that?' said Aurelius, sadly.

'No, indeed,' she answered. 'I will love you when the rocks are gone, and that will be never. Drive such foolish thoughts out of your mind.

Are you not ashamed to love a woman who is the wife of another man?'

Aurelius could plead no more. He felt his heart sink within him, and answered sadly: 'Madam, you ask what is impossible, nothing now is left me but to die,' and so he turned and left her.

Her other friends presently found Dorigen, and they strolled together up and down the alleys. Her friends knew nothing of what had passed, and began their games anew, and continued their merry sports until the sun had lost his brightness, and his last beams sunk below the horizon—until, in fact, it was night.

They bade each other good-bye, and all went home well content; all except the wretched Aurelius, who went to his house with a despairing heart. He seemed already to feel the chill of death. He stretched his hands towards the sky, and knelt with bare knees on the ground, and spoke what was more like a madman's ravings than a prayer, for he was so overcome by the misery of his hopeless love that he did not know what he was saying. He besought the Sun-god, who was lord of every plant and tree and flower, to help him in his distress. He prayed him to beg his sister, the goddess of the moon, who makes the tides of all the seas, to bring on a certain day so high a tide that all the rocks should be hidden many a foot beneath the waves. He prayed that the moon might keep *for two years* at the full, so that it might always be

high tide, and the highest rocks on the shores of Brittany might be thirty feet or more below the sea. He prayed that the rocks might sink down in some earthquake. He vowed to go barefoot to the Sun-god's temple at Delphi if only he might win his lady's love.

I cannot repeat all the mad prayers and vows made by Aurelius to the gods in whom he trusted. At length, worn out by his wild sorrow, he sank fainting on the floor and there lay for a long time unconscious. Aurelius had a brother who knew of his hopeless passion for lovely Dorigen, and this brother found him lying senseless, and guessed that Aurelius was ill from love; so he carried him to bed, where the sick man long lay delirious hanging between life and death. Aurelius, however, did not die. He was too young and strong to die of grief, but he remained ill and miserable, though he was carefully watched and tended by his brother.

Soon after this, Arviragus came home again with his brave companions, hearty and well, and covered with new honours. He was now more than ever thought to be the greatest and best of knights. Oh, happy Dorigen! She was beside herself with joy to clasp her brave husband in her arms again, her own noble knight who loved her better than his life-blood. He knew his Dorigen was as true as steel, and never cared to ask her, not he, whether any man had presumed to talk to

her of love. He joined in the dance with her, and spent his days in merry tournaments, and the castle of Arviragus was no longer still and lonely as in the days when he was away, but full of light and dancing and songs and feasting, and innocent merry-making ; and Dorigen was happier even than in the first days of her marriage.

Meanwhile, for two years and more Aurelius lay in bed, and was too weak to put his feet to the ground. His brother was his only comfort, and to him alone he confided the sorrows of his wounded heart. It is well known that no surgeon can cure a hurt in which the weapon is still sticking, and although Aurelius had no outward wound, his brother knew that one thought of despair rankled in the sick man's breast and could not be removed.

His brother was a learned man, and loved Aurelius, but he did not know how to cure his grief. He fretted in secret, and even shed tears when none could see him, over Aurelius' fate. At last, one day, he fell a thinking of his younger days, when he was a wild student at Orleans, in France, and used to seek in all manner of strange places for curious knowledge ; and suddenly he remembered a mysterious book, the very thought of which made his heart dance for joy. This book had belonged to a fellow-student at Orleans, who was a bachelor of law, but who spent much of his time in learning magic instead of law. This student had a great

friendship for Aurelius' brother, and one day had left upon his desk a strange book all about the moon and her twenty-eight changes, and the miracles that may be wrought by the hidden forces of the earth. Aurelius' brother remembered well how he turned over the pages full of odd signs and strange writing, and now he said to himself:—

'My brother shall be surely cured, for I learned enough out of that book to make me certain that there are hidden sciences by which deceiving phantoms may be called up before our eyes. Have I not heard of powerful conjurors who, while they are sitting with a great company of people in a large hall, will make a boat, rowing on the water, enter the hall? water and boat will seem to come right into the room, and all the people see the boat rowing up and down. Or sometimes they will call up the apparition of a grim lion, or show suddenly a castle built of stone and lime, and then, when the magician pleases, these vanish away. Now, if this is true, surely I may go to Orleans and find some old acquaintance learned in these dark arts, and knowing the moon's secret influences, and he might aid my brother to win his love; for such a learned man might, by false appearances, make everyone for a time believe that the black rocks had disappeared from the coast of Brittany. Ships might seem to come and go, and this illusion might even last a year or two. Then my brother would be cured of all his sorrow,

for the lady Dorigen would have to own that he had done what she had bidden him and think of what she herself had promised, and even if she should break her vow, he would at least put upon her the disgrace of a broken promise and a lying tongue.

Full of these thoughts he hastened to Aurelius' bedside, and told him of his plan, and so fired him with the hope of what they might find at Orleans that Aurelius sprang up and prepared himself in haste for the journey. He felt no longer the weakness of despair ; his limbs were vigorous again ; and so the two brothers rode on their long journey.

They rode for many a day, and at length Orleans was in sight. They had come within a quarter of a mile of the city gate, when a young student, who was taking a solitary walk, came up to them, and, to their great amazement, greeted them in Latin, and told them that he knew quite well who they were and why they had come thither.

Before the brothers stirred a foot from the place where he met them, the student told them their whole history.

The clever brother asked eagerly after his companions who used to study with him in the old times. 'They are all dead long ago,' said the student, and at this Aurelius' brother could not restrain his tears. But Aurelius had other matters at heart, and was the first to spring from his horse

and offer to go home with the student. He had had sufficient proof, he said, of his new friend's miraculous powers, and wished to have his help.

The student was well pleased, and took the two brothers home to his own house, where he gave them a rare welcome. There was no food or wine, however delicate or costly, for which they had the slightest wish, that was not set before them, and Aurelius had never in his life seen a house so nobly furnished.

Before supper the brothers were taken into the student's study, and he showed them from the windows stately forests and parks full of wild deer. He showed them a hawking match, and they could see the hawks mounting in the air above the heron, as they were trained to do, and then darting down upon him and bringing him to the ground. The student showed them also a tournament, with the knights tilting at each other with their lances, and, last of all, Aurelius was shown his lady-love moving in the dance. Aurelius was wild with delight, and it seemed to him that he was dancing too and would presently clasp his lady by the hand; but then the master of these magic sights saw that the time was come, and clapped his hands, and good-bye all! The charm was broken, the merry dance stopped, and the brothers found themselves sitting with the student in his study, and only books around them. They had never stirred out of the house, and no

one but they three had entered the house. The student then called a servant and said: 'It is more than an hour since we came into this room. Is supper ready?' Aurelius could hardly believe they had been there so long; but the servant replied, without surprise, that supper was ready, and so they sat down to it at once.

After the meal was over they still sat at the table debating how much money should be given to the magician as a reward for removing all the rocks from the coast of Brittany from the Gironde to the mouth of the River Seine. The magician made a great difficulty about doing it at all, and at last declared that he could not think of taking less than a thousand pounds, and he would not do it very willingly for that.

Aurelius never cast a thought upon the money. 'A thousand pounds?' he cried. 'Yes, or ten times as much. I am ashamed to talk of money in such a matter as this. I would give the whole wide world, if I were lord of it. It is a bargain, and I give you my honour you shall be truly paid. Only do not let us idly waste our time here, but let us start to-morrow at the latest.' 'Very well,' said the learned student, 'I agree, and will faithfully perform my part of our compact.'

Aurelius went to bed, and for the first time for years slept soundly; for the fatigue of his journey and his new-born hopes of happiness had been like medicine to his sickness, and the next morning

he started cheerfully with his two companions home again to Brittany.

Before the journey was completed, Christmas had come round. The sun, whose beams in the hot summer months had shone bright as burnished gold, seemed to have grown old with the dying year, and shed a pale and sickly light like brass. The bitter frosts and the sleet and the rain had destroyed the green growth in the gardens. Old January sat by the fire-side with his forked grey beard all ruddy in the firelight, drinking his wine from his horn cup while the brawn from the tusked boar stood frying before his nose, and 'Merry Christmas' sounded from many a lusty throat.

Aurelius did his utmost to give his guest a warm welcome, and treated him with the greatest respect, but he could not help pressing him to set to work as fast as possible to deliver him from his torture. Unless deliverance came soon, he said, he must end this suspense by stabbing himself to the heart.

The magician was so sorry for him that he worked night and day to be ready as soon as possible for the next favourable conjunction of planetary influences (I do not know all the proper words for these mysterious things) so that there might be a magic illusion, and Dorigen and everyone else might believe and declare that the rocks had been removed from the coast of Brittany, or had sunk to the bottom. At length a good time came for this juggling (it was all a miserable,

abominable, imposture), and the magician brought his tables, accurately marked the Ram, the Bull, the heavenly Twins, and all the rest of the signs of the Zodiac, and exactly calculated the distance from the right horn of the Ram to the tail of the Great Bear, and this I can tell you is not at all an easy sum to do. Then there were many spells and charms for cheating men's eyes such as were used in those heathen days; but the end of it was that within a wonderfully short time he had actually produced the illusion. By tide or fog or some more strange means, the rocks for several weeks had disappeared.

Aurelius, who all this time had been hanging between hope and despair, and watching day and night for the accomplishment of his wild wish, at last saw that the miracle was actually done. There was now no obstacle. The rocks were cleared right away.

He fell at the magician's feet and said, 'It is you, my good lord, (doubtless by the help of Venus, Goddess of Love,) who have helped poor wretched Aurelius from his cold cares, and he thanks you.'

He then went to the temple of Venus where he knew he should meet his dear lady, for he always found means to discover where she was and what she did whenever she left her house.

Dorigen was there, as he expected, and seeing her standing alone he saluted her humbly and

timidly, and said, 'My sovereign lady, whom I love and reverence as I best can, there is no other being whom I would be so loth to displease. Were it not that my love compels me either to speak or die I would conceal my sorrow. But that cannot be. I must utter my complaint to you or die at your feet; and though you may feel no pity for my death, bethink you a little before you break your pledge. Repent, I solemnly implore you, before you let me die of love for you. For lady, I remember your bidding well. Not that I claim anything from you, my sovereign lady, as a lawful right. I appeal to your justice and your mercy. You too must remember what you solemnly promised me in the garden and gave your hand and faith upon it. Unworthy though I am, you said you would love me best if I obeyed your commands. I speak for your own honour lest you should be forsworn, and your honour is dearer to me than my life. In that same garden you will now find me whenever you shall please to go there. I do but remind you of your promise. I do not pretend to force you not to break it. My fate lies in your hands. I only know that the rocks are all removed. Go and see whether I have not done your bidding.'

He took his leave, and Dorigen stood rooted there with surprise and horror. Every drop of blood had left her face. Aurelius had spoken so earnestly that she never doubted the truth of what

he said, and she felt that she was fallen into a dreadful trap. 'Alas,' she said, 'how could I think that such a marvellous, such a monstrous thing would happen; it is against all nature!' She, poor creature, hardly dared go home, and when she did she shut herself up and cried and lamented for a day or two, and often fainted away for very grief, but she did not tell a soul the cause of her distress, for Arviragus had gone away for a little while.

She sat with a pale face and sorrowful heart, and spoke to herself and said, 'I am caught in a cruel net, and there is no escape from death or else dishonour. If I break my word so solemnly pledged to this Aurelius I shall be dishonoured and no one will trust me any more, and if I keep it I shall be just as much dishonoured; for how can I leave my dear husband whom I love and go to live with another man as if I was his wife, and pretend to love him best of all, while my own real husband is still alive? Arviragus would die of shame if I deserted him, and I myself could not bear it. Death, death alone can be my deliverer in this dreadful calamity.' Then Dorigen began to think of the stories she had read of noble women who had died rather than be disgraced.

Thus for two whole days and more she lamented to herself, strengthening her resolve to die; but on the third night, before she had determined how she should die, or how she could best comfort her husband for her loss, Arviragus came home.

He was astonished at her sorrow, which she could not hide, and asked her why she had been crying so bitterly; but she could only answer him with tears. At last she said, 'Alas, that I was born!' and told him of her fatal vow.

Arviragus kept a cheerful face, and said kindly, 'Are you sure, Dorigen, that this is all?'

'Nay,' she said, 'were it not the will of God, I should say this were too much.'

'Let us not think, dear wife,' he answered, 'of what is done past cure. Listen to me. Honour is the most sacred thing we have. I would rather die than that you should break your word once solemnly plighted, however foolishly.'

With that Arviragus could not keep back his tears. Then he went on and said, 'I will tell you what you shall do. You shall keep your promise as far as in you lies. That will not dishonour you in my eyes; and as for the disgrace which will fall upon you if anyone else should know about this matter, I think we can prevent that evil. I solemnly command you by the obedience you vowed to me as my wife never to breathe a word of all this to any living soul. You shall go privately to meet Aurelius at the place which he has named, and then you shall tell him I have sent you to him. For a short time he shall take you where no one shall see or know you, and you shall do your best to behave to him as if you were his loving wife. Then you shall secretly return to me, and all will be well.' Arviragus spoke

cheerfully, but it nearly broke his heart; while Dorigen, though she never thought of disobeying her husband, felt that to obey was almost as bad as death.

Arviragus called a squire and a maid, and told them to accompany Dorigen to the garden, and then return. So the lady and her two attendants started for the place. I cannot describe to you the parting of Arviragus and Dorigen, but it was very terrible for both.

Now the road to the garden lay through the town, and in the street Dorigen met Aurelius, who was himself on his way to the garden; for he was always on the look-out whenever Dorigen left her home. Aurelius eagerly saluted her, and asked her where she was going.

She answered him wildly, like one who is talking in his sleep, 'I go to the garden, as my husband bade me, there to keep my word.'

Aurelius could scarce believe his ears: his heart leapt up with joy. 'At last,' he whispered, 'you are mine.' But his joy was short: he noticed her absent looks, her hollow eyes, her face from which all hope had faded. As he went by her side out of the town and past the meadows towards the garden, his pity grew stronger and stronger, and at last he turned all over in his mind, and felt that he could not be so mean as to take advantage of a promise so innocently made and so nobly kept. Far better that he should give up his foolish passion, and consent

to lose a short and hollow pleasure, than be thought mean-hearted, and cause such sorrow to the very woman he loved. He too was gently bred, and he would show it. All this passed quickly through Aurelius' mind.

At last he spoke shortly, and said, 'Madam, since I see how dearly your gentle husband loves you, and that you cannot conceal your own distress, and since that noble knight would sooner suffer himself than have you break your troth, I will now tell you that I would lose my soul sooner than come between your love and his. I release you, Madam, from your promise, and any other you may have made to me, and faithfully declare that I will never reproach you with breaking your word to me. You are the most true woman and loving wife that ever I knew. Only let every wife beware of Dorigen's rash vow. Believe that a squire as well as a knight can do a gentle deed.'

Dorigen thanked him on her knees for his generosity, and went home to her husband, and told him all; and you may be sure that he was better pleased than any words of mine can describe. The knight and his lady went back to their happy life, and no trouble came again to spoil their joy—a joy as sweet and deep as is ever given to mortals here on earth. You may well believe there was never a word or thought of anger between those two. He cherished her as though she were his queen, and she was true to him for evermore.

The gratitude and praise of Dorigen were a sweet reward to Aurelius, but yet he went home with a heavy heart, for he had thrown away his prize, and had still to pay the price of it. He cursed the day when he was born, and said, 'Alas! alas! that I have promised to this philosopher a thousand pounds' weight of the purest gold! What shall I do? I see no way of escaping utter ruin. I must sell my inheritance, and be a beggar and a wanderer; for unless I get easier terms from my creditor, I can live here no longer to shame my kindred with my beggary. However, I will pray him of his great courtesy to give me time, and let me pay him year by year upon appointed days until the whole sum is made up. In any case I will keep my word with him. I will be as faithful to my promise as Dorigen.'

So he went with a sore heart to the coffer where he kept his money, and brought out gold to the value of five hundred pounds, and asked the young student, the magician, to grant him of his goodness time for the payment of the rest. 'I dare boast, master,' he said, 'that I have never yet failed to keep my word, and my debt to you shall be surely paid; but it would be a great kindness to me if you will wait for a part of the money for two or three years, else I must sell my inheritance. Still, if you will have it so, I will pay you all now, though I go a beggar bare in my shirt.'

The philosopher answered him sternly, 'Have *I not fulfilled* my agreement?'

'Yes, that you have,' said Aurelius, 'truly and well.'

'Have you not won the lady as she promised?'

'No, no,' answered Aurelius, and broke into open sorrow.

'Why! what was the cause?' asked the student, and then Aurelius told him what had happened. 'Arviragus,' he said, 'out of his generous heart, would rather have died of sorrow and distress than that his wife should break her word for him.' And he told also of the grief of Dorigen, how innocently she had made the vow, and how she had never even heard that such wonderful things lay within the art of man. 'All this,' said Aurelius, 'filled me with such pity that I sent Dorigen freely back to Arviragus, as freely as he had bid her come to me.'

'Dear brother,' replied the student, earnestly. 'Each of you acted nobly by the other. He is a knight, and you are a squire, but God forbid that a poor student should not be able to do as gentle a deed as either of you. Sir, I forgive you quite the thousand pounds, just as if I had never known you. I will not take a penny of you in return for all my knowledge or my pains. You have entertained me liberally, and that is enough. Farewell! and God be with you.' So he took his horse, and rode back to his own country.

My tale is done. Answer me now, my lords and ladies, which of the people in my story showed *the most generous* heart?

CHAUCER.

CHAUCER'S TALE.

Our Host looked round as if uncertain whom to call on next, and, with a merry twinkle in his eye, he turned to me, who was riding a little behind the rest, and said, 'Look up, man! Why always staring at the ground as

if you would find a hare? Just look at him, gentlemen! Men say he's a poet, and yet he sits there as dumb as a stone, and his eyes are dazed, as if he was always poring over books. And yet he is no starved student to look at. Why, he's as big round the waist as I am. His wife must find him an armful to embrace; and yet there is something wild about his face, and while we are all joking together, he alone rides in silence.

'Wake up, man, and tell us a tale of mirth. Others have done their part, and we look to you.'

'Come, Sir Host,' said I, 'you must not be too hard upon me. Tales of my own know I never a one; but if you like I will give you a tale I heard when I was a boy.'

GAMELYN.

ONCE upon a time there was a knight named Sir John Bounds. He was well-bred, as a noble knight ought to be, and famous in tournaments and feats of arms. This knight had three sons. The eldest was called John after his father, but he was not like his father at all; he was a mean wicked man, and soon showed it plainly, as you shall hear. The name of the second son was Ote, and the third and youngest son was called Gamelyn. Ote and Gamelyn loved their father very much, but John deserved his father's curse, and had it at the last.

Now the good knight Sir John grew old, and at last death came to take him; and as he lay ill in bed, he thought and thought what would become of his children after he was dead. He had travelled much, but he had never taken pains to

save his money and get rich, so that he had nothing to leave them but his lands which he had won by the sword. He thought that he should like to have all his lands fairly divided among his three sons, so he sent for some wise knights who would help him to give each of his sons his proper share. He wrote letters to these knights, and told them to lose no time in coming if they wanted to see him alive.

When the knights heard that he was ill in bed, they came as fast as they could, and rode both night and day until they came to where Sir John was lying quiet, waiting God's good time. 'Sirs,' said he, 'God will let death take me soon. I shall not live much longer in this world of pain.'

All the knights were sorry to hear him say that. 'Do not lose heart, Sir John,' they said. 'God may turn evil into good, and make you well again.'

'It is true,' the knight said, 'that God can turn evil into good, but all the same, I beseech you, if you are true friends of mine, go and divide all my lands among my three sons. Do it fairly, Sirs, for the love of God, and do not forget my youngest son, little Gamelyn. If one son is made the heir, you very seldom see him help his brother.'

So the knights left Sir John Bounds' bedside, and debated how they should divide his lands. First they thought it much the best to give all the land to one:—they quite made up their minds that a boy like Gamelyn was to have no land at all.

Then they thought that it would perhaps be right to take some notice of what Sir John had said; so they divided all the land between the two eldest, and let young Gamelyn go without. For they said, 'Let his brothers give him land some day or other when he has grown a bit, and knows what land is worth.' They made no secret of it, but came back to Sir John's bedside, and told him how well they had settled everything. Sir John, however, was not pleased at all.

'By Saint Martin,' he said, 'the land is still mine to leave. For the love of God, neighbours, stand still round my bed and I will make my will myself, and say how I mean my lands to be divided. John, my eldest son, shall have five farms; that was what my father had in his lifetime, and my second son shall have five farms, which I won with my right hand. All the rest shall go to Gamelyn, lands, bondmen, horses and all. And now, my good neighbours who are wise in laws about land, I beseech you, for Gamelyn's sake, see that my will is carried out.'

The knight lay on his death-bed, and was soon as still as a stone, and died when his time came, as was the will of Christ. But no sooner was he laid under the sod, than the elder brother John cheated the young boy, and took his land away from him, and gave Gamelyn nothing except shabby clothes and bad food. He let his land go to waste, and his houses tumble down; he let his forests be

felled, his palings rot, and his deer stray away. In fact, all that his father had left to Gamelyn his brother John stole or ruined; though John's skin smarted for it one day, as you will hear.

Gamelyn lived in his brother's hall and grew taller and stronger every year. He grew soon so tall and strong that the boldest man about the place, young or old, was afraid to provoke him.

One day Gamelyn stood in his brother's yard, and stroked his beard which was beginning to grow. He thought how his fields were all unsown, and his fine old oaks cut down, his park palings broken, and his deer stolen away; how of all his horses there was not one left; how the roofs were off his houses, and their walls all tumbling down. Then thought Gamelyn, 'This is not right at all.' Just at that moment, as Gamelyn was brooding over his wrongs, his brother happened to pass, and called out to him, 'Have you got my dinner ready?'

Gamelyn grew angry, and answered, 'Go and bake your meat yourself; I won't be your cook.'

'What do you mean by this, Gamelyn?' said his brother; 'you never spoke to me like this before.'

'No,' said Gamelyn, 'I never thought before of all the harm that you have done me. My park palings are broken, and my deer stolen away; of all my armour and my horses nothing is left; all my father gave to me is gone to rack and ruin, and may you get God's curse for it.'

'Vagabond!' said his brother, 'stand still, and hold your tongue. Be glad you have a coat to your back, and victuals enough to live on. What is land to you, Gamelyn?'

'A curse on the man who calls me vagabond!' said Gamelyn. 'I am no more vagabond than you are, and no worse man. My mother was a lady, and my father a knight.'

Gamelyn looked so angry that his brother dare not come a foot nearer to him, but called his men to him, and said, 'Go and beat me this boy, and take a little of the conceit out of him, and teach him to answer me fairer another time.'

Then said young Gamelyn, 'You are my brother, but I curse you all the same. If I am to get a beating now, you shall be the one to give it me.'

Then Gamelyn's brother was in such a rage he made his men fetch thick sticks to beat Gamelyn. Gamelyn saw them coming back, and looking round about him, he soon spied a thick club lying under a wall. Gamelyn was light of foot, and snatched up the club, and drove all his brother's men together like a flock of sheep. He looked like a lion, and laid about him lustily. When Gamelyn's brother saw that, he thought it was time to go; so he fled up into a loft, and shut fast the door. Some of the servants were fond of Gamelyn, and so were glad to run away, and all the rest were in such a fright of him and his club that they too

made off. Then Gamelyn began to make fun of them.

'Ill luck to you,' he cried. 'What a hurry you were in for a tussle, and now what a hurry you are in to be off.'

He looked about for his brother to see where he had run to, and saw him peeping out of the window of the loft.

'Come a little nearer, brother,' laughed Gamelyn, 'and I will teach you how to play at cudgels.'

But his brother swore by Saint Richard that he would come nowhere near him until he put the cudgel down.

'Put your club down,' he said, 'and I will make it up with you, so do not be angry any more.'

'I had need to be angry,' said Gamelyn, 'seeing you were going to make your men break my bones for me. They would have done me a mischief too if I had not had good strong arms.'

'Do not be angry, Gamelyn,' his brother said. 'I should have been very sorry for you to be hurt. I was only pretending, just to see how strong you are, although you are so young.'

'Come down from the loft, then,' said Gamelyn, 'and give me what I ask, and we shall soon agree.'

Down came the false and wicked brother, who was sore afraid of the club, and said, 'What is it you ask for, brother Gamelyn? Whatever it is you may be sure I will give it you directly.'

'If we are to be friends,' said Gamelyn, 'you must give me all my father left me.'

'That you shall have, Gamelyn. I swear by Heaven you shall have all your father left you before his death, and more too if you want it. I will sow your fallow land, and build your houses up again.'

So spoke the false knight with his lips, but in his heart he meant to cheat Gamelyn. Gamelyn never thought of cheating, and went and kissed his brother, and then they were good friends. Alas for young Gamelyn, he could not tell a traitor!

Now it happened after this that the criers cried a wrestling-match which was to be held not far away, and a ram and a ring were set up as a prize. Gamelyn meant to go to see what he could do, and when the day came he said to his brother, 'By Saint Richard, brother, you must lend me a good fast horse to-night, for I have an errand a mile or so away.'

'Go and take the best horse that stands in my stalls,' said his brother, 'and tell me where your errand is to-night.'

'The criers have cried a wrestling-match to be held not far away, and a ram and a ring are set up for the prize. It would be a fine thing for us all, brother, if I could bring them both home to this hall of ours.'

So a horse was saddled. Gamelyn put on his spurs, and was off to the wrestling-match.

As soon as Gamelyn had ridden out of the gate, the false knight, his brother, locked it after him, and prayed to Jesu Christ, the King of Heaven, that Gamelyn might break his neck.

When Gamelyn reached the place, he got down from his horse and stood upon the grass, and presently he saw a country squire wringing his hands and lamenting. So Gamelyn said, 'What is the matter, my good sir? Can I not help you out of your distress?'

'Ah, young sir,' said the squire, 'I would I had never been born. I had two fine sons, and I have lost them both. There is a famous wrestler in these parts, who is the champion, for no man has ever been able to throw him, and he has done me great evil, for he has killed both my sons in wrestling. Perchance it was God's will that they should die. Anyhow, I would give a hundred pounds and more, if I could find a man to-day to give this champion a rough fall.'

'My good friend,' said Gamelyn, 'just hold my horse while my man pulls off my shoes. I will go into the ring, and see what I can do.'

'God speed you,' said the squire, 'do as you say. I myself will be your man, and pull off your shoes. Never fear about your good horse and your clothes—I will keep them safe enough.'

Gamelyn came into the ring, barefoot and stripped, and all the people wondered, because he was so young. They wondered how he could

dare to come and try his strength against the terrible champion who had hurt so many men.

The champion was sitting down, waiting to see if anyone would dare to wrestle with him. He started up at once when he saw Gamelyn, and went up to him, and said, 'Whose son are you? You must be a great fool to come here.'

'You knew my father well enough while he was alive,' answered Gamelyn; 'his name was Sir John Bounds, and I am Gamelyn.'

'I knew your father, fellow,' said the champion; 'and as for you, Gamelyn, I don't care if I tell you that I knew you too, and a mischievous young scoundrel you were when you were a boy.'

Then Gamelyn answered, 'I am older now, and you will find me still more mischievous I think, my fine fellow.'

'Come on, then,' said the champion. 'I'll soon make an end of you if once I get a hold of you.'

It was late when Gamelyn had come to the fair, and the moon was shining bright when he began his tussle with the champion. Gamelyn stood stock-still and bid him do his best, and the champion tried to throw him first in one way and then in another. Then said Gamelyn, 'You take your time, my good friend, in giving me a fall. I have stood against many a dodge of yours, and now you shall see a dodge or two of mine.' Then Gamelyn grasped the champion in good earnest. He knew many a fall in wrestling, but he only

needed to try one, and threw him on his left side so hard against the ground that the champion had three ribs broken and his arm as well. All the people standing round could hear his arm snap. Then said Gamelyn, 'Shall that count for a throw, or shall it not?'

'Whether or no,' said the champion, 'woe to the man who gets a throw from you.'

The squire who had lost his sons blessed and praised Gamelyn, and said to the champion, 'This young fellow you were laughing at has taught you a trick in wrestling for once.'

'That is too true,' said the champion. 'I have been a wrestler many a year, and never been so roughly handled as I have been to-night.'

Gamelyn stood alone in the ring, and looking round him said, 'If there are any more, let them come on; for the champion seems to have had enough of it.' But Gamelyn still stood alone, for there was not a man dare wrestle with him after what he had done to the champion. Then the two masters of the sports came and greeted Gamelyn, and told him to put on his clothes for the fair was over.

'Why, I have not half sold my wares!' said Gamelyn.

'None but a fool would buy them,' said the champion; 'you sell your wares so dear.'

'You, at all events, have bought them full cheap,' said the squire; for he thought how his

two sons were dead, while the champion only had his bones broken.

The judges brought to Gamelyn the ram and the ring, and said he was the best wrestler that had ever come there.

So Gamelyn won the ram and ring; and the next morning he took his prizes with him and started for home again. His brother saw him coming, and a crowd of people with him, and ordered the porter to shut the gate and keep them all outside. The porter was afraid of the wicked Sir John, and ran to the gate, and bolted it fast. Presently Gamelyn came up with all his new friends, and called out, 'Porter, undo the gate, for many a good man's son is standing waiting here.'

'No, no, Gamelyn, you shall not come a step into this yard,' said the porter, for he thought that Gamelyn was safely bolted out.

'You lie,' said Gamelyn; and with that he drove his foot against the gate, and broke away the bolt.

When the porter saw that, he started off to run, but Gamelyn said, 'It is no good your running, for I am as light of foot as you, whatever you may say.' He ran and caught the porter, and broke his neck with a blow, for Gamelyn was angry, and then he took him by the arm and pitched him in a well that was seven fathom deep. After this there was not a man to be seen in the yard of all Sir John's men.

Gamelyn opened the gate as wide as it would

go, and let in everyone that cared to come. In they rode and in they ran, and Gamelyn said to them, 'When I left home yesterday there were five tuns of wine in my brother's cellar. Come in one and all. We will be masters here, and ask no one's leave, and we will not part company while a drop of wine is left. Never mind my brother, whether he grudge it us or not. I am housekeeper for once, and will keep the keys. My brother is a stingy fellow, but never mind him; we will spend what he has spared, and whoever says no shall go and keep the porter company down the well.'

For seven days and seven nights Gamelyn made merry, and feasted all his friends, and nobody said nay, but they all laughed and ate and drank. Gamelyn's brother kept in a little turret all by himself, and saw all the fun and waste, but dared not say a word.

But when the week was up, on the morning of the eighth day, all the guests came to Gamelyn and said they must go home. He said there was plenty of wine left, and tried to make them stay, but they would not, and said good-bye.

All the week the bad Sir John thought of plans to ruin or get rid of Gamelyn, and was as glad as Gamelyn was sorry that all the guests were gone.

When Gamelyn was left alone, his brother came out of his hiding-place, and said, 'How is it you have made so bold as to waste my food and wine?'

'You have no need to be angry, brother John,'

said Gamelyn; 'you have had my land these sixteen years, and all my horses too, so you have been well paid for our week's meat and drink. There is not a horse in your stables that is not bred from mine which my father left me on his death-bed.'

Then said the false knight, 'Listen, Gamelyn, I have no son of my own to be my heir, and so I have determined to leave all I have to you. I swear to you that one day you shall have not only what is yours, but what is mine as well.'

'By my faith,' said Gamelyn, 'if that is the case, and you mean what you say, I am quite satisfied.'

'But there is one thing I must tell you, Gamelyn,' said his brother. 'When I saw you throw my porter into the well, I was in such a rage that I swore a great oath that you should be bound fast hand and foot, and now, I pray you, let yourself be bound so that I shall not be forced to break my vow.'

'You shall not break your vow for me,' said Gamelyn. So they made him sit down until he was tied fast hand and foot. Then his brother sent for strong fetters to make all safe, and told everyone that came in that Gamelyn was mad.

Gamelyn stood upright bound to a post in the hall, and everyone that came in stared at him, but no one gave him food or drink either day or night. Then he said to his brother, 'I find you are a villain, after all; and if I had known it sooner I

would have given some hard knocks before I had been bound.'

For two days and two nights Gamelyn stood stock-still, and did not have a morsel to eat or a drop to drink. On the third day he saw Adam the steward when no one else was near, and said, 'I think it is quite time for breakfast, steward Adam. Oh, Adam! my father loved you much; and now I beg you, for his sake, let me go, if you can come at the keys. I will give you half my lands if you will let me loose.'

Then said Adam, 'I have been your brother's steward these sixteen years, and if I were to let you loose he would call me a traitor.'

'You may be true to him, Adam, but I swear you will find him one day false to you. Be true to me, dear Adam, and I will treat you like a brother, and share my land with you.'

At last Adam the steward said, 'That is a good offer, Gamelyn, and I will do all I can for you.'

'Do your part,' said Gamelyn, 'and may I never prosper if I do not do mine.'

As soon as Adam's master was fast asleep in bed, Adam stole the keys and let Gamelyn go free. He unlocked the handcuffs on his wrists and the fetters on his feet, and untied the strong cords that bound him to the post, for Adam thought he could trust Gamelyn to be a true friend, and share his lands with him, as he had promised.

Gamelyn was very glad to be free again, but

was faint from want of food. 'If I only had something to eat and drink,' said he, 'not a man in this house should bind me to-night.'

Adam took him softly into the larder, and set him down to supper. Not a soul in all the house knew that they were there. 'Eat away, Gamelyn,' said Adam; and Gamelyn did eat.

When Gamelyn had eaten enough of the best in the larder, and had drunk great cups of the red wine, he said to Adam: 'What shall we do now? Shall I go to your master and knock his brains out.'

'No, no,' said Adam, 'I know a plan worth two of that. I know for certain that this very next Sunday we are to give a great feast. There will be many an abbot and prior there. Now you shall stand up by the post in the hall, as you stood before, but I will leave your chains unlocked, so that though you shall seem to be bound fast you can throw them off in a minute. You shall wait until all the guests have done their dinner and washed their hands, and then you shall beg them all to have you set free. If they do what you ask, and make your brother set you free, then all will be well; you will be at liberty, and I shall be free from blame. But if every one of them refuse to help you, then I have another plan:—you shall have one thick stick and I will have another, and bad luck to either man who shall not do his best.'

'I will do my best, never fear,' said Gamelyn.

'But now, brother Adam, you must tell me what shall be the sign for me to throw my fetters off and make these holy men do penance for their sins.'

'I will give you warning right enough,' said Adam. 'When I give you a wink, come straight to my side.'

'This is a fine plan of yours, Adam,' said Gamelyn.

When the next Sunday came the guests flocked to the feast. Every one of them, as he came in at the hall door, stared at Gamelyn standing tied to the post. When his false brother saw their surprise, he came up to each of them, and told all the shameful tales he could invent about Gamelyn.

All sat down to dinner, all except Gamelyn, and had their plates filled again and again. Then said Gamelyn, 'Where's a plate for me? God knows it is not right that I should stand and fast while others sit and feast.'

The guests looked round, but the false knight, Sir John, told them all that Gamelyn was mad.

Gamelyn heard what he said, but answered not a word. He thought all the more of Adam, and of Adam's plan; and so after a time, when they had finished feasting, and had washed their hands, Gamelyn began to speak dolefully to the great lords that sat in the hall, and said, 'For Christ's sake, my lords, say a good word for Gamelyn.'

Then answered an abbot, 'May the curse of Christ, and St. Mary too, fall upon any man who

helps you out of prison, and their blessing upon any man who shall do you harm.' Another abbot said, 'I would have your head off your shoulders, though you were my brother. Sorrow seize those who would help to set you free.' So said all the guests; and a prior added, 'It is a very great pity, boy, that you are still alive.'

'Now I see,' said Gamelyn, 'that I have not one friend among you all. Bad luck on abbots and priors, and on any who may show them favour. My curse on the whole brood of you—the curse of the innocent and the helpless.'

Adam, the steward, was taking off the table-cloth. He looked at Gamelyn, and saw that he was angry. Adam was folding up the table-cloth, but thought little enough about his pantry. He went quietly and brought two thick cudgels to the door of the hall. Then he winked at Gamelyn, as he had said he would. Gamelyn threw his fetters off, and sprang to Adam's side, and caught one of the thick cudgels, and set to work. Angry and grim they both looked when they came into the hall and glared about them. Fast and thick fell their blows on abbot, prior, monk, and canon, like the drops of holy water when the priest is sprinkling the congregation. Some fled, some were knocked down, and some fell into the fire. Not a servant in the hall wished Gamelyn anything but good. They stood looking on, while Gamelyn and Adam beat the monks, and felt no pity for

such selfish, heartless men. One after another Gamelyn caught the cowards. Abbot or prior, canon or monk;—no matter, down he went. Gamelyn paid them in full what he owed. 'Well done, Gamelyn,' called Adam, 'for charity's sake, don't grudge them their due, if you love me. I will keep the door. May I never hear mass again if a monk of them shall pass until he has made a clean shrift, and done full penance for his sins.'

'Never fear,' said Gamelyn, 'keep the door well, and I will thrash them one by one, and see how many there are.'

'Mind you don't hurt them,' said Adam back again. 'Remember, Gamelyn, they are holy men, so save their shaven crowns, and do not spill a drop of their blood, but break as many arms and legs as you have a mind.'

So Gamelyn and Adam made sport of the monks, and frightened them out of their wits, and beat them soundly. They had come riding jollily, with their servants behind them, but they went home again sadly in carts and waggons.

'We had better have stayed at home, Sir Abbot,' said an old Grey Friar, 'and dined on bread and water.'

While Gamelyn was settling his account with monks and friars, his brother stood by and cut a doleful figure. Gamelyn raised his trusty cudgel, and with a single blow felled him to the ground,

and set him in the same fetters he had worn himself an hour before.

'Sit there, brother,' said Gamelyn, 'and cool your blood, as I did mine.'

As soon as Gamelyn and Adam had had their revenge upon their enemies, they asked for water, and washed themselves, and the servants—some from love, and some from fear—brought them all the best there was in the pantry.

So Gamelyn and Adam had a merry time, but it did not last long.

The sheriff lived only five miles off, and in a little while he was told that Gamelyn and Adam had bound and wounded men against the king's peace. So the sheriff cast about in his mind how he should put Gamelyn in prison, to be tried for his misdeeds. At last there came to him twenty-four bold young men, who said they would go and fetch Adam and Gamelyn if he would give them leave. The sheriff gave them leave gladly, and so they started off as quickly as they could, and never stopped until they came to the gate of Gamelyn's house. They knocked loudly. The porter was close at hand; but instead of opening directly he looked slyly out of his grating, and when he saw twenty-four young men waiting to come in, was afraid they meant to play some trick on his young master, so he kept the gate shut and asked the young men what it was they wanted. One spoke

for them all, and said, 'Undo the gate, porter, and let us come in.'

'You must tell your errand first,' answered the porter.

'Very well; go and tell Gamelyn and Adam, that if they please we should like to have a word with them.'

'Stay where you are, my fine fellow,' said the porter, 'and I will go and tell Gamelyn, and take my orders from him.'

The porter went straight to Gamelyn, and said, 'Sir, I have come to warn you that your enemies are here. The sheriff's men are at the gate. They are come to take off you and Adam, and there is no escape.'

'No escape?' said Gamelyn; 'wait a bit before you talk of "no escape." Go back to the gate, and parley with them awhile, and you shall see me play a trick, porter.'

'Adam,' said Gamelyn, 'we must bestir ourselves; our foes are at the gate. The sheriff's men have sworn to take us, and are come to do it.'

'Do your part, Gamelyn,' said Adam, 'and ill befall me if I do not stand by you well this day. We will give the sheriff's men a warm welcome, and some of them shall go to bed in our dungeons to-night.'

Gamelyn went out at the postern gate, and Adam after him. Gamelyn caught hold of a cart prop, and Adam got a cudgel too, and came to

help him, and they laid about them merrily. Adam felled two of the sheriff's men, and Gamelyn felled three, and the rest began to make off as fast as they could go.

'Why so fast?' called Adam the steward. 'Let me serve you with a drink of my good wine before you go.'

'No, no,' said the young men; 'we don't like your wine. It's so heady that it's like to turn a man's brains inside out.'

So Gamelyn and Adam sent the sheriff's men back even faster than they came. This was all very well; but presently Gamelyn looked, and saw the sheriff himself coming, and a whole crowd of people with him.

'Adam,' said Gamelyn, 'what is your advice now? Here comes the sheriff, and he will have our heads for this. If you ask *my* advice, I think we had better not stay here any longer, or we shall get into trouble. I think we had better take to the woods before we are found. A wood and liberty is better than a town and prison, though it were the best town ever built.'

Adam took young Gamelyn by the hand, and first they took a cup of wine together, and then they mounted their horses and rode away.

The sheriff soon came up to the house. There was the nest, but the birds had flown, for Adam and Gamelyn were gone. The sheriff got off his horse and went into the hall, and there he found

the false knight tied fast to a post. The sheriff was shocked to find the master of the house treated like this in his own hall, and he untied him as quickly as he could, and sent for a doctor to mend his broken back.

Meanwhile Gamelyn and Adam were walking in silence through the forest, and Adam did not like it much. 'Now I see,' said he, 'what a fine thing it is to be a steward. I wish I were walking about with my keys again, instead of wandering here tearing my clothes to pieces in this wild wood.'

'Take heart, Adam,' said Gamelyn, 'many a good fellow gets into trouble now and then.'

While they stood doubting what to do, Adam heard the sound of men talking, and it seemed to him that they were close by. Gamelyn stooped down, and peeped under the boughs, and soon saw seven score of young men sitting in a ring at their dinner; they were well clothed, and were all fresh and merry.

'You see, Adam,' said Gamelyn, 'I have caught a sight of meat and drink, and that will suit us both, I think.'

Adam stooped too, and looked under the boughs, and was glad enough to see meat and drink, for he hoped to have his share of it.

Adam had just said how he longed for a good meal, when the leader of the outlaws looked up and saw him through the boughs. All the men

who were at dinner were outlaws, and had run away from the sheriff for some reason or other, as Gamelyn had done, and their leader was the best and boldest of them. When the chief of the outlaws saw Gamelyn and Adam, he said to his young men, 'I see some guests coming; God send us none but good. There are two young men, well dressed, and well armed; and it is likely enough there are some more of them if you were to look. Rise from your dinner, my men, and fetch the strangers here. It would be as well to know who and what they are.'

Seven young men started up from their dinner, and went to meet Gamelyn and Adam the steward, and as soon as they came close one of the outlaws said, 'Give up your bows and arrows, young men.'

'Sorrow seize me if I do,' answered Gamelyn. 'Go and fetch five more, and then there will be twelve of you.'

When the young men saw that Gamelyn was strong, there was not one who wanted to do him harm; they only said quietly and peaceably, 'Come and see our master, and tell him your tale.'

'Who is he?' said Gamelyn.

They all answered together, 'Oh, he is the crowned king of outlaws.'

'Come along, Adam,' said Gamelyn, 'for heaven's sake. He dare not for shame deny us meat and drink; and, if he is generous and nobly born, he will give us food gladly, and do us a good turn.'

'Let him do what he will,' said Adam; 'I am so hungry that I'd venture into a den of lions.'

So Gamelyn and Adam went to the king of the outlaws, in great doubt as to what kind of welcome they would get. When they had greeted him, the king asked, 'What makes you wander in the greenwood, young men?'

Gamelyn looked at the king, and answered, 'Sir, those who may not walk in town must needs walk in the greenwood. We have come here meaning no harm, but only to shoot a chance deer, and get ourselves some food. What else can a man do when he is hungry?' The king of the outlaws looked at Gamelyn and Adam, and took pity on them, and made them sit down and rest themselves, and eat heartily of the best he had. When Gamelyn and Adam had eaten and drunk, Adam told the king of outlaws that this was Gamelyn, and how they had both been driven to the wild woods. When the king had heard the tale he made Gamelyn the chief under him of all the outlaws, so that Gamelyn was second to the king himself.

Now, about three weeks after this, tidings came to the king of the outlaws, that he might now return home as soon as he liked, and that his enemies were ready to make peace with him. The king was very glad of this good news, and called all the outlaws together, and told them that he was forced to leave them.

As soon as he was gone, the outlaws lost no time but crowned Gamelyn their king.

So Gamelyn was now king of the outlaws, and wandered with his band of young men freely in the greenwood.

Meanwhile the false knight, Gamelyn's brother, was a greater lord than ever, and was made sheriff. So in his spite he issued a writ against Gamelyn, and offered a reward for catching him, just as if he were a wolf or some wild beast. All the men who had been Gamelyn's servants were very sorry for this, and some of them went out into the woods to look for Gamelyn, and tell him all about it, and how all his goods had been seized, and all his friends ruined.

The servants searched the woods for a long time. At last they found him. They came and knelt before him, and threw back their hoods, so that he could see who they were, and said, 'Sir, we have brought you bad news, but do not be angry with us for that. Your brother is the sheriff now, and has charge of the prison, and he has issued a warrant against you, and has put a price upon your head, as if you were a wolf or a wild beast.'

'I wish I had not done things by halves,' said Gamelyn. 'It is a rare pity I did not break his neck, instead of only cracking his back. Go back and greet all my friends, and say I shall be at the next assize if I am alive.'

Sure enough the next time the assize was held,

and the false knight was sitting as sheriff, Gamelyn came boldly into the great hall among all the lords, and put back his hood, and said, 'Good morning, my lords. God save you all! but as for thee, broken-backed sheriff, mayst thou never thrive! I have come, my lords, to ask why he has put me to shame, and raised a hue and cry against me.'

When the wicked Sir John, the false knight, saw Gamelyn come into the hall, all alone, he was rejoiced to have him in his power. He would not allow Gamelyn to speak up for himself, but sent him straight off to prison. So at last Gamelyn was caught by his own doing.

Now Gamelyn's other brother, Sir Ote, lived a long way off. He was as good and gentle a knight as ever lived, and when at last the news reached him of all that had befallen Gamelyn, he was very sorry. He ordered a horse to be saddled, enquired which was the right road, and presently arrived at the place where his two brothers were.

Then said Sir Ote to the sheriff, 'There are only three of us brothers, and there will never be any more, and now you have put in prison the best of us all. How could you treat a brother so?'

'Spare your breath,' said the false knight. 'Gamelyn will only fare the worse for your meddling. He is safe in the king's prison for the present, and there he shall stay until the judge comes to try him.'

'No, no,' answered Sir Ote; 'it shall not be as bad as that. I will go bail for him, and then you are bound to give him up to me if I promise that he shall stand his trial when the time comes. Then let him take his chance.'

'Very well, Sir Ote,' said the sheriff. 'I will deliver him to you; but if he does not appear when the judge comes, I swear by my father's soul that you shall be taken and punished instead of Gamelyn.'

'Very well,' said Sir Ote. 'Give him up to me, and I will be content to suffer for him if he does not come to stand his trial.'

So Gamelyn was given up to his brother, Sir Ote, and they spent that night together. But the next morning Gamelyn said to the gentle Sir Ote, 'To tell the truth, brother, I must now leave you. I must go and look what sort of life my young men are leading, whether they are living happily, or are quarrelling with each other.'

'That's bad news for me,' answered Sir Ote, 'for now I see that all the trouble will fall upon my head. When the judge sits, and you are not to be found, I shall be put in prison in your place.'

'Never fear, brother,' answered Gamelyn. 'If Almighty God keep me alive and well, I will be ready for the judge when he comes.'

'Well, Gamelyn,' said the kind Sir Ote, 'God keep you from the shame of breaking your pro-

mise. And come back when you like, but do not let me come to harm for your sake.'

So Gamelyn rode gaily back to the greenwood, and there he found his merry men waiting for him. They all had fine fun together, Gamelyn and his men. They told Gamelyn the adventures they had had while he was away, and they were glad to listen with all their ears while he told them of all that had happened to him—how he had been fast bound in prison, and about his good brother Sir Ote.

Gamelyn led a merry life while he was an outlaw, and was always good and kind to the poor country people. He never hurt or frightened one of them; but if he found a friar or a monk, an abbot or a canon, he took away all he had, and left him nothing at all.

All the while his wicked brother the sheriff had been busy searching for twelve men who would be wicked enough to find Gamelyn guilty. The sheriff said he would give them money, and make them the jury to try Gamelyn, and they promised to find him guilty of death, whatever anyone said.

One day Gamelyn was standing alone in the fields, looking at the woods and musing, when suddenly he remembered his promise to Sir Ote that he would be ready when the justice came, and he thought it must now be near the time. So he said to his young men, 'Get yourselves ready as quick as you can, for when the justice

comes to the court we must be there. I am only loose now because I promised to go back again, and, if I do not keep my day, my brother will be bound and tried instead of me.' And his men answered, 'Only say the word, and whatever you order shall be done.'

Now, while Gamelyn and his men were on the way to where the justice sat, the wicked sheriff was busy hurrying on the trial. He had brought his wicked jurymen ready to the court, and had not forgotten to pay them the money to have Gamelyn hanged; and as Gamelyn had not yet appeared, he determined to have Sir Ote tried and hanged in his stead.

Gamelyn came from the greenwood with his fine fellows, and as soon as he was near the town he said, 'I see well enough that the justice is sitting, and that the trials have already begun. Go first, Adam, and see how things are faring.'

Adam went first, and walked into the court, and looked all about, and the first thing he saw was the kind Sir Ote standing in the middle bound hand and foot.

Adam ran out of the court as if he had seen a ghost, and came and told Gamelyn and his men, 'Sir Ote stands in the great hall, bound hand and foot.'

'Young men,' said Gamelyn, 'you all hear that. Sir Ote stands in the great hall, bound hand and

foot. By God's help, he that has treated him so shall repent it.'

Then said old Adam, shaking his white head, 'The man who did it was a wretch. If you take my advice, Gamelyn, you will not let one of the villains come out of the hall alive.'

'No, no, Adam,' said Gamelyn, 'we will only punish the guilty, and let the others off. I will go into the hall, and have a word with the judge, and punish those who are guilty; and do you, my men, keep the door, and let none of them escape. I will be judge to-day, and give just sentences. Come in with me, Adam, and be my clerk, and I hope I shall prosper at my new trade.'

His young men bade Gamelyn go and do his best. 'And if you have need of us,' they said, 'you shall find us staunch and steady. We will stand by you to the last, and if we do not do our work like men, never pay us.'

'Trust me, and I'll trust you,' answered Gamelyn.

The justices were sitting in the hall, when in strode Gamelyn, and bade them unbind his brother Ote, and let him go free.

'You had almost stayed away too long, Gamelyn,' said the gentle Sir Ote, 'for they have already sentenced me to be hanged.'

'Brother,' said Gamelyn, 'this day the men that would have hanged you shall be hanged themselves—the jury, and the judge, and the

sheriff who began this villany.' Then he said to the judge, 'Your power is at an end. You have given wicked and unjust sentences this day, and I must sit in your seat, and set them right again.'

So said Gamelyn; but the judge sat still, and never offered to move. Then Gamelyn struck him on the cheek bone, and broke it in two, and took him up by one arm, and pitched him over the bar of the court; and the bad judge broke his arm against the floor.

No one dared say a word against Gamelyn, for fear of his men outside; so he sat himself down in the judge's seat, and made the good Sir Ote sit by his side and Adam at his feet. Then he ordered the judge and the false sheriff to be bound side by side, and brought to the bar the wicked jurymen who had condemned his brother to be hanged. When he had caught them all, he had them bound too, and passed the same sentence on them which they had passed upon Sir Ote.

The sheriff, Sir John, begged hard for mercy, but Gamelyn said, 'It is too late for that. What would my fate be, or Sir Ote's, if you were master now?'

So to make a long story short, Gamelyn's men hanged the twelve jurymen, and the false sheriff, and the wicked judge. They hanged them up high, and left them on the gallows to swing and shrivel in the wind.

Such was the end of the false knight through

his own treachery, and thus his father's curse came true.

The elder brother, Sir Ote, and young Gamelyn, took all their best friends with them, and went to the king himself, and made their peace, and were found guiltless by the highest court in all the land. The king was pleased with Sir Ote, and made him a judge, and afterwards he made Gamelyn chief justice of all his free forests, and the king forgave Gamelyn's young men all the wrong that they had done, and gave them posts of honour.

So Gamelyn got his lands again, and paid off his enemies. And the good Sir Ote made him his heir; and Gamelyn married a lady, who was both beautiful and good, and he and his wife lived together while it was God's will. And after a while Gamelyn was laid under the green grass, where we must all lie some day.

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